

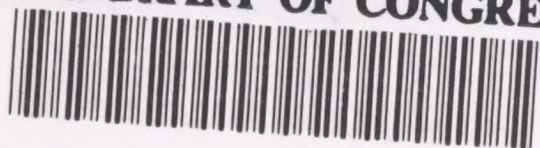
For the House
of La Cromie

By

T.W. Entwisle



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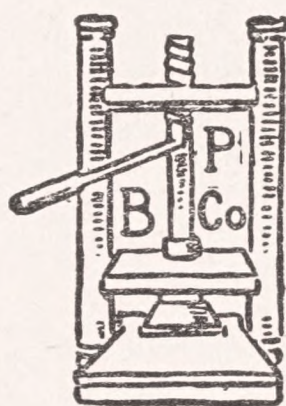
The air rang with the clang of steel.

For the House of LaCromie

A STORY OF PIRACY AND THE COMMUNE

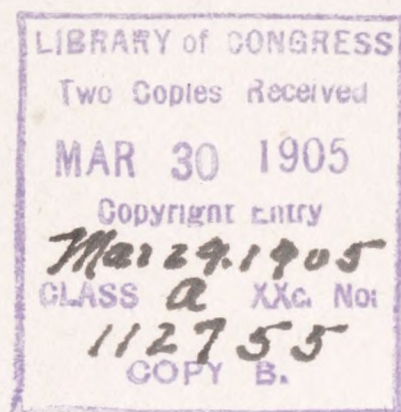
BY

T. Walter Entwisle



Broadway Publishing Company

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TO HIS
FIRESIDE QUARTETTE,
EDITH, FRANK, SARA AND ESTHER,
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR.

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The air rang with the clang of steel

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“JACQUES LA CROMIE!” she exclaimed,

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“I am LUCILLE RENAUD,”

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“Ven you sail, Captain?”

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FOR THE HOUSE OF LACROMIE.

CHAPTER I.

THE REFUSAL OF A NOBLEMAN.

"BUT I'll make you a noblewoman."

"Of what use will that be to me?"

"Then, Bess, you say you will not have me?"

"There is no use, Jacques, in me trying to deceive you."

"You mean to say that you care more for that Ben Loveland."

Bessie Turner made no reply to the sneer, but silently watched the figure of Jacques LaCromie as he wrathfully paced before her upon the beach. Bessie, a brunette of seventeen, with dark brown eyes, long tresses that hung down her back, a well rounded face with rosy cheeks, was a fisherman's daughter. Her home was on the south side of Morris River Cove in Southern New Jersey and across the wide inlet that came in from the Delaware Bay was the farmhouse of Pierre LaCromie,

a Frenchman, who had come from France to find a home in the wilds of America. Jacques, his eldest son, was a frequent visitor to the little settlement on the south side of the cove, and upon this occasion he had found Bessie upon the shore, so took the opportunity to protest his love and ask her hand.

"Bessie Turner, you may refuse me now," said the Frenchman's son, with a lowering look at the fair daughter of the fisherman, "but you will be my wife, though you say you care more for Ben Loveland than for me."

"I didn't say I cared more for Ben," she protested.

"You might as well have said it."

"And suppose I do?"

"He'll never get you for a wife."

"Go!" said the girl, pointing across the cove, her eyes flashing with anger. "I have heard your threats before, and I am not afraid of them or of you."

"Bess!" hissed the young Frenchman, but she simply turned and walked up the beach towards her home.

"You will be my wife whether you want to or not," he called out to her.

She turned, pointed across the cove, and resumed her walk towards her father's cabin.

Hot with anger, Jacques hoisted sail on his fishing skiff, the *LaBelle*, and was soon heading across the cove towards the creek that skirted his father's farm. A mile out he saw a sail heading in from the bay, and a second look showed that it was Ben Loveland's new cat boat, the *Vixen*, which had proved herself to be the swiftest craft in the cove. He had beaten Jacques in from the fishing banks twice in a week, and this, with the fact that he was a rival for the hand of Bessie Turner, led the young Frenchman to the determination to get revenge.

Veering around to port, Jacques, who was a very skillful skipper, ran his boat's head into the wind, then let her fall off slowly, and sailed for some distance in a course parallel to the shore, all the time watching the movements of his rival's boat, and calculating the distance that lay between them. Careening with the wind on her beam, Loveland's trim-looking boat sped swiftly and gracefully over the waves, heading for the landing opposite the Turner cabin.

Pointing outward Jacques went on a starboard tack that took him across the cove at right angles with the *Vixen*. The *LaBelle* was heavier than Loveland's boat, and the Frenchman resolved to take chances. The *Vixen* was running a straight course, and with the wind on his port quarter,

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Jacques saw that the boats would meet midway in the inlet unless one or the other altered its course.

"Boat ahoy!" yelled Ben, as the skiffs approached.

The *LaBelle* kept on her tack, and the *Vixen's* helm was put to starboard to pass Jacques astern, but the wily Frenchman luffed a few seconds later, ostensibly with the intention of permitting Loveland to get out of the way, then put his helm about again.

"Have you lost your head, LaCromie?" demanded Loveland, and he pulled his mainsheet to clear to starboard, but the boats struck the next instant. The bow of the *LaBelle* stove in the side of the *Vixen*, while Ben, who was standing in the stern sheets, was thrown overboard by the collision.

Loveland came to the surface quickly and caught the side of his boat, but she filled immediately and sank, leaving him swimming in the middle of the inlet. Without tendering his rival aid, Jacques coolly shook out his sail to the wind and stood across the cove towards his home.

"You contemptible coward!" cried the owner of the *Vixen*. "Are you going to leave me here to drown?"

"It was your fault," replied the Frenchman as

he sailed away. "You ran me down on purpose."

"You're a liar!" hotly retorted the swimmer.

"Just keep your own opinion of the matter," was the taunting reply of Jacques as his boat headed across the cove.

Deserted by his enemy, Loveland derided him as he sailed away, then started to swim towards the shore. But the incident on the water had been observed from the beach by Bessie Turner, who quickly hoisted sail on her father's skiff, and was soon by her lover's side. Across the water the rescue was witnessed by Jacques, who hissed a threat to himself that she would some day be his wife, whether she wanted to or not, while Loveland, a passenger in the fisherman's boat, was vowing vengeance upon the owner of the *LaBelle* when next they met.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH JACQUES DISOBEYS ORDERS.

LOADED with fruit and vegetables from the farm of Pierre LaCromie, the shallop *Jersey Blue* stood out from the landing on the Morris River early the following morning for the Philadelphia markets and headed towards the bay.

"Now, Jacques," said the farmer as the son hoisted sail, "don't take chances, but run in if the wind freshens too much."

Jacques made no reply to this injunction, but as the shallop sped away under the impulse of the breeze that caught the mainsail on the beam, he said to his brother Jean, five years his junior:

"Father is always afraid we will get a little wind. Shake out that topsail, Jean, and let's get some speed to this old boat."

Watching the shallop until it was almost lost in the distance, farmer LaCromie returned to the house with his mind filled with nameless fears and forebodings, which he vainly endeavored to

shake off. He said nothing to his wife when he returned to the house, but went out on the farm, but for some reason found it impossible to give much attention to his labors of the day.

The wind blew freshly from the south, sending the white caps over the wide expanse of the bay, and the *Jersey Blue* poked her nose deep into the billows, sending the spray over her deck.

"Jack," suggested Jean to his elder brother, "hadn't we better shorten sail? See how's she listin'. That topmast will break pretty soon."

"Sacru! Shorten sail, Jean? She's doing fine," was the reply.

"Where are you going, Jacques, you are headed down the bay?" inquired the young brother.

"We're going to New York," was the response. "There's nothing in the Philadelphia trip. We've made that so often that it is stale as goat's milk."

"To New York?" exclaimed the younger brother in astonishment. "Jacques, are you mad?"

"No, my blue-eyed mate, not mad, but we can do better with this load of goods in New York than in Philadelphia among the Quakers, and we are going to sell this cargo if it takes a run to the West Indies."

"But father——" protested Jean.

"Yes, you're always talking to me about father,"

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interrupted Jacques petulantly. "He's too blamed careful in all of the orders he gives. He would never have been run out of France if he had not been so easy with his enemies, but he will find that we can do better in New York than up the river in Philadelphia. Besides we are going to get a bit of adventure."

"Yes, and go to the bottom before we get outside the capes," replied Jean, looking anxiously to windward, where the white caps curled in an ominous way. Then glancing to the topmast that was bending with the strain put upon it by the canvas that was bellowed out by the wind, he urged his brother to take the topsail in.

"We'll not get home for two weeks, Jacques," pleaded the younger brother. "Let's go back."

"Not this time, my sailor lad. We're going to make Manhattan and see the pretty Dutch girls, or my name is not LaCromie, formerly of the French empire, now a Jersey nobleman."

"But what will father and mother think?" said Jean, with tears in his eyes. "They will mourn for us as drowned."

"They will know better when we get back with the locker full of guilders from the Dutch," was the heartless response.

"Better take in that topsail," again urged Jean. Jacques simply laughed at his brother's fears,

but before the smile had faded from his face there was a crash, the spar snapped and hung with the sail flapping in the wind. Jean watched the motions of the topsail with blanched face, but with a laugh Jacques told his brother to take the helm, and with the agility of a monkey sped up the shrouds and soon cut the broken topmast loose and pulled the sail in, though his work was made perilous by the swaying of the boat in the heavy sea.

As the wind was still strong from the south, Jacques consented to drop anchor under the lee of the New Jersey shore, and wait for smoother sailing before going outside, and the remainder of the day and the night were spent just above Cape May Point. Jacques soon dropped off to sleep after the evening meal, but his younger brother lay in his bunk a long time weeping softly as he thought of the anxious ones at home.

The morning dawned with clear skies and a good breeze from the west, and immediately after breakfast sail was hoisted and the *Jersey Blue* stood out towards Cape May. Jean again pleaded with his brother to turn back, but Jacques turned upon him so savagely that the younger brother sank back in the cuddy hole and said no more.

"If you are afraid, Jean," said Jacques contemptuously, "I'll let you have the yawl and you

can go home and I'll take this cargo around to New York myself."

"No, Jacques, I'm not afraid, but I'm thinking how father and mother will be grieved when we do not get back by Wednesday or Thursday night."

"Oh, father, again! It's always 'father' with you!"

The wind freshened after the shallop had reached a point opposite Cape May, the little village that was destined to become one of the fashionable watering resorts of the Atlantic coast in the years to come. A few miles further on Jean called attention to a vessel that was some miles out, but was apparently heading in for a closer run along the shore.

"Going the same way we are, Jean," replied Jacques gaily. "Perhaps we'll beat her there."

The boat, which was seen to be a bark, was some miles astern of the shallop, and the boys watched her with some interest.

"She's being magnificently sailed, Jean," was the comment of Jacques, as he watched the stranger go about and stand out to sea again.

The bark, which had a very shapely hull and rakish-looking masts, stood on her starboard tack only a few minutes, then came back on a long reach to port, and passed a mile astern of the

Jersey Blue. The boys could now see that her deck swarmed with men, and for the first time they noticed a cannon mounted upon her fore-castle. Then her ensign was run up.

"My God, the black flag!" exclaimed Jacques. "Jean, that's a pirate!"

The shallop was sailing five miles off shore from what is now known as Townsend's Inlet, and as that was her only refuge, Jacques put his helm hard to port and determined to make an effort to reach the harbor; but five minutes' sailing showed him the uselessness of the race, for the bark swung across his course, veered to starboard, and as she did so the gun on her fore-castle belched forth. The shot whizzed into the rigging of the *Jersey Blue*, struck the mainmast, cut the halyards, and the mainsail came rattling to the deck.

"There's no use, Jacques," cried Jean. "They'll murder us if we try to get away."

"They may murder us, anyway," retorted the elder brother, and dashing into the cabin he returned with a pistol, and stood waiting upon the deck watching the boat that had put off from the pirate bark, whose name was now seen to be the *Raven*.

"You may as well put that toy away, my boy," said an officer in command of the boat's crew that came alongside. "We want to see what you have

aboard. We don't fight boys unless they get troublesome. Anybody else aboard?"

"No," responded Jacques.

"And where might two such young mariners be heading for?"

"New York."

"Where you from?"

"Morris River Cove."

"Ahem, your father accustomed to sending his children out on such trips as this?" and the boat's crew laughed at the sally, while the face of Jacques reddened under the taunt.

"Watermelons? Good!" exclaimed the officer, as he looked into the hold of the *Jersey Blue*. "We're just a bit short of fresh fruit. Corn, by the horn spoon! And canteloupes! Here's potatoes, quite a cargo. My boy," he continued, addressing Jacques, "we're real sorry that things are so pressing in our line, but we're too busy to put into New York for these goods, so we'll save you the trouble of going there, too. Your father, no doubt, will be anxious about you, so we'll unload right here."

The shallop was pulled alongside of the *Raven*, and in a short time all of the *Jersey Blue's* cargo was transferred to the pirate bark.

"Bring those boys up here, lieutenant," said a commanding voice, and soon Jacques and his

brother were standing upon the quarter deck in the presence of a man of medium height, full sandy beard and restless gray eyes. His uniform freely trimmed with gold lace told of his station on the pirate craft.

"Your name?" demanded the captain of the elder brother.

"Jacques LaCromie, sir."

"Huh, French?"

"Yes, sir."

"This is your brother?"

"Yes, sir."

"How old are you, Jacques?"

"Nineteen."

"And he?"

"Fourteen."

"Too young," mused the captain.

"Bell!" called out the captain in the same imperious voice that had marked the entire interview, and in response to the summons the officer who had boarded the shallop came up and saluted.

"That eldest boy is a likely chap. Keep him."

"And the light-haired boy?"

"Too tender for this business. Send him ashore."

From the deck of the *Jersey Blue Jean* was commanded to get into the shallop's yawl. He

turned towards the bark as he stepped into the small boat and saw his brother at the side of the *Raven*.

"Now pull for home, young one," commanded Bell.

"Isn't Jacques going with me?" pleaded the sobbing boy.

"No, he's goin' to stay with us."

"Oh, don't kill him!" cried the youth. "Take me, but don't kill Jacques!"

"Oh, shut your clapper, boy, we're not going to hurt your brother. He's goin' to be one of the crew. Now get off with you before we are compelled to jab you a little to make you go."

"Jacques! Jacques!" called the broken-hearted lad in an agony of grief, but his brother had disappeared from the bark's side.

"Off with you, you baby!" bade the officer, and taking his seat at the oars, the weeping boy, blinded by his tears, bent to his task, and slowly pulled towards the shore, but soon began to row in a circle.

"Here, my hearty, you've lost your reckoning," cried Lieutenant Bell. "You're pulling out to sea. Turn round and go the other way. Now farewell."

The pirate bark, which had been lying with her head to the wind during the transfer of the cargo

from the shallop, now stood out to sea. Seated in the yawl, unmindful of his own peril, Jean La-Cromie watched the *Raven* until she had become a mere speck upon the horizon, then slowly pulled towards the mouth of the inlet.

CHAPTER III.

THE PERILS OF JERSEY FORESTS.

THE sun was sinking when the keel of Jean's boat grated upon the sand on one of the inner coves of Townsend's Inlet. Weak and worn out by the tension of the day's exciting events he stretched himself upon the shore and looked out to sea. There was nothing visible of the *Raven*, and as the blinding tears again came, the lonely boy, tender of heart and true, thought of his far-away home, and wondered if he and Jacques would ever see the faces of their parents. The pirate officer who had sent him off in the shallop's yawl had given the lad nothing for the larder, and he sank supperless to bed upon the sand with the starlit sky for the ceiling of his bedroom, and the God who cares for lost boys as his guardian.

The sun was streaming over the beach when he awoke. A vision of a strange man had come into

his dream, and beside him stood a young Indian. The warrior was tall, his body indicated great strength, but despite the natural cunning of his face there was still something kindly in the eyes of the stranger. Some of the neighbors of the LaCromies at Morris River were Indians, they frequently traded with them, and the French lad felt no fear at finding the stalwart red man by his side.

The look upon the Indian's face indicated surprise at finding the white lad there, but he was unable to understand Jean's explanation. The Indian pointed to his canoe, which lay upon the beach a short distance away, and he and his pale-face passenger were soon moving up the inlet into the mouth of a small tributary, propelled swiftly by the strong strokes of the dusky oarsman. A mile up the stream the Indian ran his canoe into a little bayou, leaped ashore, and motioned Jean to follow. He led the way a short distance into the forest of pine trees, and entered a village of about a dozen tepees.

Three or four women and a number of children came trooping toward the pair, and soon the French lad was surrounded by a curious crowd of boys and girls, whose too close attentions were resented by the captive. His captor finally came to his relief, and, pushing aside the noisy young

Indians, led his prisoner to a wigwam, where a squaw sat weaving a basket. Faint and hungry, the lad tremblingly awaited the pleasure of his jailor, who addressed some words to the squaw, and leaving the tepee, she soon returned with a warrior who wore the American dress.

"Where live?" he asked of Jean.

The interpreter's knowledge of English was very limited, but after much difficulty the French lad made him understand that he came from Morris River, and that he had lost his way. The interpreter conversed for a short time with the captor of Jean and frequently pointed towards the east, then both left the wigwam. Alone with the squaw, Jean made the woman comprehend that he was hungry, and she brought some Indian corn cake and a bit of fish, which the lad devoured ravenously, while the squaw watched him with evident interest and sympathy.

While Jean ate his breakfast he noticed a group of Indians seated in a circle in the opposite tepee, and he became conscious that he was the subject of the earnest conversation. The powwow became very animated, and was ended by the chief springing to his feet and brandishing his tomahawk, the other Indians imitating his example. A large circle was formed by the members of the tribe, and two Indians then rushed into the wigwam where

Jean was tremblingly awaiting his fate, and dragging the French lad into the center, fastened him to a small pine tree, then began their war dance, yelling and brandishing their hatchets. The young warriors ran their knives around the head of the captive in imitation of the act of scalping, and under the terror of the moment Jean swooned.

When the French lad regained consciousness a familiar voice was haranguing the tribe, and he heard the name of LaCromie uttered by the speaker, who was Blackbird, a friendly Indian, whose home was not far from his father's farm. There were mutterings of discontent among the warriors, but the speech seemed to satisfy the old men, and the pair were permitted to depart.

Blackbird plunged into the forest in a course that lay nearly east until a small stream was reached, then bidding the boy follow, they waded fully a quarter of a mile down the little creek and again plunged into the forest.

"Indian follow," was the only explanation of his guide's action.

Worn out by the nervous strain of the scenes of the morning, and the fatigue of the journey, for Blackbird had set a fast pace, Jean sank exhausted upon the ground when a halt was made for the night. As he thought of Jacques and his terrible fate—for Jean believed his brother was

reserved for some horrible death—tears again filled his eyes and he wept bitterly.

But his thoughts were turned upon their present peril by the actions of the Indian. A fire was kindled, a bird that the guide had shot was cooked for supper, and some berries served for a dessert. Then the dusky son of the forest gathered some sticks, fashioned them to resemble two human forms, with their feet to the embers of the fire. In the gathering gloom the resemblance was quite marked. Retiring a short distance from the fire Blackbird and Jean stretched themselves upon the ground, and were soon fast asleep.

The boy was awakened by the crack of a rifle and a yell. A spy had found the camping place, had attacked the decoy figures, and had paid the penalty with his life.

“Hush! no talk!” was the whispered warning of his guide, and obeying the pressure upon his arm, Jean crept after Blackbird upon his hands and knees among the pines. No sound was heard save the chirping of the crickets and the lone hoot of an owl. Slowly the Indian and his paleface charge made their way through the darkness and halted in a clump of trees.

“More Indian there,” whispered Blackbird.

The faintest snapping of twigs beneath moccasined feet attracted the attention of the chief,

and he pressed the arm of the lad as a signal to maintain silence. A dark form came close to the spot in which they were hiding, stood motionless as if listening intently, stepped forward a few paces and again listened. There was a dull, heavy sound, and the dark form dropped to the ground with his skull laid open by a blow from Blackbird's tomahawk.

Taking Jean's hand, the guide led him swiftly through the forest. A yell of rage borne to their ears upon the night air told the fugitives that the dead man had been found by his companions. For an hour Blackbird pressed on and came to a clearing in the center of which stood a cabin. The barking of a dog announced that their arrival had been discovered by the faithful canine sentinel, but a peculiar whistle was given by the Indian, a window was shoved back and an answering note came from the cabin. A voice bade the dog be still, and the door swung open. As they entered the little hut, Jean recognized in the figure in hunting garb Bill Sanders, whose exploits were well known on the LaCromie farm.

"Sit down, boy," said the trapper. "No danger that them red varlets will trouble this place. They've tasted of this medicine too often," and he tapped his rifle significantly.

The hunter listened to Jean's story with evident

interest, and learned from Blackbird that the Indian had reached the village just in time to save the life of the lad, the orgies preparatory to the massacre being at their height when he suddenly entered the circle, kicked away the wood that had been gathered, and rescued the intended victim. The capture of the shallop by the *Raven* was of special interest to Sanders, who followed Jean's narrative very closely.

"Did ye hear any names?" asked the hunter.

"I heard the officer that came aboard our boat called Bell."

"Bell!" exclaimed Sanders, springing to his feet. "The cutthroat!"

But why the mention of that name so stirred the hunter was not imparted, for he pulled hard at his pipe and relapsed into a gloomy silence, and Jean thought he detected tears in the eyes of his rough but kind-hearted host.

The morning found Blackbird, Sanders and Jean embarked in the hunter's boat at the mouth of Denny's Creek, near which the cabin was located, and soon the little craft was bearing northward along the coast on Delaware Bay heading for Morris River Cove, twenty miles away. Anxious as he was to reach home, Jean dreaded the painful ordeal of telling his father and mother of the fateful voyage of the *Jersey Blue* and the capture of

Jacques, his brother. At noon he was at the door of the farmhouse that was never again to shelter Jacques LaCromie as a member of the family. But upon the pathetic grief of that household the curtain will be drawn.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST DAY AS A PIRATE.

WITH the cargo of the shallop's stores in her larder, the *Raven* stood out to sea. Jacques had been ordered below when Jean was taken over the side, and he caught one glimpse of the agonized face of his fair-haired brother as he turned and uttered his pathetic call. A half hour later Jacques was summoned to the quarter deck by Captain Hammond. The *Raven's* commander surveyed him with critical eye, then asked:

"Can you handle a sword?"

"A little bit," replied the French lad.

"If you are any good you will stay with us. If not, you will be given a chance to walk the plank. McGonigle," he called, addressing a brawny Irishman, "fetch me a pair of swords."

The sailor tumbled rather than walked down the companionway and soon returned. Taking one of the swords brought by the Irishman, Captain Hammond handed the other to Jacques.

"Rakes!" called the captain, and a thickset,

bearded sailor of medium stature stepped forward, and in broad Yorkshire dialect replied, "Aye, aye, sur." Captain Hammond passed the sword to Rakes, then said:

"Now, my hearties, let's see the play."

During the brief preparation for the duel Jacques had an opportunity for a short survey of the crew. He estimated the bark's company to comprise about one hundred men, and was surprised at the evident character of many of the sailors, whose faces indicated anything but the traditional murderers of the high seas. The majority were young men, and seemed more like rollicking mariners than a band of robbers as they gathered about the combatants, for they encouraged the newcomer with good-natured badinage, and in the combat for piratical honors seemed to think he was outclassed by his sturdy antagonist.

Pierre LaCromie had been a famous swordsman in his native land, and had taught Jacques in his early youth the use of the weapon. The lad had been an apt student, and Pierre LaCromie admitted that his son was his equal as they fenced in the daily lesson at the Morris River farm. The young Frenchman surveyed Rakes as the Yorkshire man waddled up and found that he was confronting a man of strong physique, but was not the equal of Jacques in agility.

The sailor with a broad leer upon his face made a quick pass at Jacques, but the thrust was parried so deftly that the crew cheered and leveled taunts at Rakes, who was now upon the defensive in the quick and sturdy blows that were aimed at him from all sides by the agile French lad. Goaded on by the jeers of his companions Rakes endeavored to beat Jacques off, and aimed a fierce blow at his arm, but it was caught on the ready sword of the French lad, and Rakes received a wound in the side.

"Rakesey, you'd better cover that briddbasket or yees'll loose all the dinner to the Frinch lad," called out McGonigle.

Hot with rage the Englishman lost all his caution, and trying for an opening, aimed a murderous thrust at Jacques' heart. It was warded with a skill that again brought out a cheer from the crew, and the next instant the Yorkshireman's blade fell to the deck.

"Disarmed, shiver me timbers!" exclaimed Boatswain Kelly.

"Run him through, LaCromie!" commanded the captain as Rakes stood panting with the vigorous exercise of the combat.

"I don't strike an unarmed man," replied the victor calmly.

"What!" roared the captain, with a terrible oath.

“Do you disobey? Now take care of yourself!”

Captain Hammond pulled a glittering sword from his scabbard and faced the nobleman's son. A quick and vicious blow was aimed at his arm, but it fell upon the deftly wielded sword of Jacques. The pirate commander rained blow after blow at his youthful opponent, who was gradually driven close to the hatchway, but was defending his life with a skill that enraged the captain, and made the crew wonder. The sword point of Hammond slightly pierced the arm of the French lad in one of his thrusts, and the wound brought to the heart of Jacques all of the fire and courage of his nation; with fierce attack he took the offensive, moved to one impulse—the life of the man before him, who was bent upon his destruction; and he reeked not the consequences. The air rang with the clang of steel above the hoarse shouts and oaths of the pirate crew, while fast were the blows and swift the thrusts, but neither duellist had gained any further advantage. For an instant the shoulder of Captain Hammond was exposed, and like a flash the sword of Jacques reached it. With a horrible oath Hammond lunged for his opponent's heart, but his stroke was brushed aside and the sword of Jacques pierced the captain's arm, and his sword was whirled from his hand.

Breathing hard, with eyes shooting hatred and contempt, the French lad placed his foot upon the fallen blade and hissed:

“Run him through, LaCromie!”

Captain Hammond, his face flushed with rage, pulled his pistols from his belt.

“No!” cried Boatswain Kelly.

“Who dares say no?” roared the pirate commander, and stalking up to the boatswain, he levelled the pistols, there was a double flash of flame and Kelly fell dead upon the deck with two bullets in his brain.

“Flog him for mutiny!” ordered the captain, pointing to Jacques.

A dozen men seized the almost exhausted boy, stripped his shirt from his back and lashed him to the mainmast. Jacques made no outcry. His arm was bleeding from the wound, but in his excitement he felt no pain.

“Are you men a pack of cravens?” he asked. “I won both of these fights fairly.”

“Take the lash, McGonigle,” commanded Captain Hammond, “and lay it on well.”

“Captain,” replied the Celt, his face pale, but with determination written upon his countenance, “yees have niver seen me run from Malay or Chinese, Briton or Amerikan, and begorrah, yees

niver will, but to bate sich a boy as that is not in my line."

A volley of oaths and a cowardly blow in the face was the captain's response.

"Strip him!" was the order, and McGonigle was bound to a stanchion. "Rakes," he called, "do your duty!"

The blows fell mercilessly upon the back of the noble sailor, but his teeth were firm set, and he made no outcry. Then upon the bare back of Jacques the lash was applied, and when the brutal sailor had completed his task the young victim hung weak and bleeding, but no one dared interfere.

"By the Pole star!" said a sailor in a low tone to a mate whose name was Piedmont, "you may toss me for a cooley if I don't fix Rakes the first fight we're in."

"Release them and lock them in the brig," ordered the captain, and Jacques and his new-found friend were taken below, while Hammond, followed by Bell, walked to the cabin. As the captain passed the dead body of the boatswain, he said:

"Toss that carcass overboard!"

He was obeyed instantly, and the pirate crew threw the dead body of Kelly into the sea with as little concern as if the man had been a dog.

"Bell," said Captain Hammond, as he sat in his luxuriously appointed cabin watching the ship's surgeon bind his wounds, "there's grit in that boy."

"Yes, captain," replied Bell, "but it did not help matters to flog him."

"The brat! I did not flog him for his good fight, but for his insolence. That must come out of him."

"The crew did not look at it in that way."

"The crew!" sneered the captain, with one of his characteristic oaths.

"Yes, the crew," retorted Bell with some warmth. "They took due notice that he did you in the duel."

"Have a care for your own neck," roared the captain, springing from his chair, "or you'll dangle from the yardarm!"

"Never by your orders," retorted the executive officer with equal warmth. "Come out on deck and order the crew to do it. They hate you, and if I raise my hand they will mutiny in a minute and string you there in a jiffy!"

"Bell," said Hammond, "I've stood more of your impudence than I propose to take."

"Do your worst," sneered the lieutenant. "Why did you shoot Kelly?"

"Because I'm the commander of this boat."

Bell paced the cabin for a few minutes, and neither officer spoke. Then halting before Hammond, he said: "I deserted the British navy, captain, to aid you in this cruise, and I'll not desert you now, but rave as you please, you'll regret that you have made that French boy your enemy."

"He'll walk the plank to-morrow."

"And you'll be tossed into the sea like a dead rat."

Another volley of oaths was the response.

"Captain, will you listen to reason?" said Bell. "You know that the British have put a price upon your head. Your crew can fight like demons, but any more performances like that of to-day and they'll not draw a cutlass or pull a lanyard."

Hammond, like all blusterers, was a coward at heart, and while he chafed under the words of his first lieutenant, he dared not resent them, for he knew the threat of Bell was not an idle one. He was too imperious to admit the truth of the admonitions, but he ended the quarrel by opening a locker and taking out a bottle of wine, over which the two discussed the details of the voyage. A half hour later the *Raven's* bow was headed northward.

Apparently unconscious of his own wounds, the Irishman wiped the blood from the bleeding back of Jacques, bathed the cuts and welts with water,

and placed the boy in a bunk, the only one in the narrow prison. Later the surgeon entered and administered to the needs of the prisoners.

Jacques tossed upon his hard bed, his thoughts more upon revenge than upon his wounds. The fierce combats upon the deck of the *Raven* had thoroughly aroused his nature, and the farmer's boy had been transformed into a buccaneer. He was among pirates, he was one of them, for he had demonstrated his superiority in a fight with the chief, and he thirsted for an opportunity to finish the work he regretted he did not perform when Hammond stood disarmed before him. Anger and hatred burned more than did the fever of his wounds.

"Jacques, me boy," said McGonigle, creeping to the side of the bunk, after listening to the muttered threats, "be aisy wid your talk. This bark's got ears and they all belong to the captain."

"McGonigle," replied Jacques, extending his hand, "you're a brave fellow. I thank you for your kindness to me to-day."

"Jacques," said the Celt, "Oi'm not in this business for pleasure. I ran away from Cork because Lord Kelvev was ferninst putting me in jail for wallopin' his boy because he struck my sister. Begorrah, I licked him right, and he de-

served all an' more than he got. I started for Ameriky, but was captured by Captain Hammond before I got there. He gave me the chance of walkin' the plank or jinin' his crew. It wassent me that wuz bait fur the fish, but I moight as well have jumped overboard. But hist, me boy," and McGonigle spoke in a low whisper. "Ye have got the right stuff in yees. Jist kape your own counsel whin ye git out of here. Yees will be a captain some day, or me name's not Dennis McGonigle."

CHAPTER V.

THE MERCHANT BUCCANEER.

Two reasons actuated Captain Hammond in changing the course of his vessel: to touch at some point on Long Island for water; and to learn, if possible, the whereabouts of the men-of-war that had been sent in quest of the *Raven*. So the pirate bark's prow was turned towards New York.

Five years he had preyed upon commerce and eluded the warships of three nations. He had been cashiered in the British navy for cowardice, and for a year was a prisoner at Portsmouth. While on parole he had planned the capture of the *Raven*, and gathering a crew from the malcontents, boarded the bark while a naval reception was in progress, and escaped in the darkness. The few men aboard of her who declined to enlist in his service he permitted to leave in one of the bark's boats ten miles out from port, an act of mercy in marked contrast with some of Hammond's after-conduct. A reward was placed upon the head of

the deserter by the British government, and knowing that he would receive no quarter in an encounter with the English, he gave none, and his career was marked by repeated acts of cruelty. Bell was an American by adoption, and had gone to Philadelphia, then to New Castle in Delaware. Restless, averse to work, but a born sailor, he met Hammond's pirate crew during one of their orgies at Bombay Hook on the Delaware Bay, and boldly offered himself to the commander of the buccaneers, who promptly gave him a commission. Bell was very fond of the society of women, and frequently sailed across to the little settlement at Morris River, and when he met Hammond's crew was fleeing from an enraged father, whose wrath he had very good reason to fear. The complement of the *Raven's* crew, which consisted of one hundred and twenty-five men, was filled up by the impressment of sailors from the prizes captured on the high seas.

The morning of the third day after the initiation of Jacques as a member of the pirate crew, the *Raven* dropped anchor just inside a cove on the southern shore of Long Island. A little band of Indians, the only occupants of that part of the island, watched the boat's crew that came ashore, but quietly withdrew without offering any resistance. In the cabin of the bark two men, Ma-

kensie and Wentzel, the latter a Dutchman, were receiving instructions.

"Wentzel," said Captain Hammond, "you'll find Hans Schneider in New York, his office is at the foot of Broadway. Show him this." And Hammond took from a drawer a ring in which glistened a small and very peculiar cluster of diamonds, bearing inside the initials "H. S." "Just ask him how trade goes and what he knows of the movements of the war ships."

With a mainsail set to one of the *Raven's* boats, and carrying a cargo selected from the spoil of the *Jersey Blue*, Wentzel and Makensie left for New York early the next morning. Captain Hammond paced the deck uneasily as he watched the mock trucker's boat head along the island shore, then turning abruptly to his executive officer, he said:

"Lieutenant Bell, summon the ship's crew."

The shrill pipe of the acting boatswain sounded along the decks, and the summons was promptly obeyed by the company of armed sailors.

"Rakes, bring McGonigle and LaCromie on deck," commanded the pirate captain, and the awkward Yorkshireman shuffled down the companionway.

Lieutenant Bell involuntarily clasped the hilt of his sword, then glanced at the brace of pistols

in his belt. His lips were tightly pressed, but he said nothing.

"McGonigle," said Hammond, with something like a smile lighting up his harsh face, "you are promoted to boatswain."

"Thankee, sir," replied the stalwart Celt, touching his forehead.

"LaCromie," added the captain, addressing Jacques, and the murmur of satisfaction that had attended the announcement of McGonigle's appointment was hushed to a painful silence, while Bell clutched the hilt of his sword, "you have been promoted to midshipman."

The cutlass of every sailor waved in air, and a roar of "Hammond! Hammond!" floated out over the cove, while the crew crowded about with their congratulations.

"Serve extra grog," was the parting command of Hammond, and he turned and went to his cabin.

"Some sense in his pighead at last," muttered Bell, as Hammond left the deck. "By all of the demons in hell,"—his favorite oath—"he or I would have gone had he tried to have carried out his threat."

In the meantime Wentzel and Makensie, toggled out as farmers, were on their way to the New York markets. As they sailed through the Narrows into what is now the greatest harbor of the western

continent, a sunset gun boomed over the water, and the masquerading truckers saw a British flag lowered.

"Luff up, Wentzel," said his companion, "and run alongside and see who she is."

At the bow was the figurehead of a woman, and the name *Queen Bess*. The truckers were hailed by an officer on deck.

"No melons like these be was ever growed already," said Wentzel, holding up one of the green specimens stolen from the shallop.

"Where from?" queried the officer.

"From Jersey, by shimminy, the only place that vas."

The barter was prolonged for some time, and Wentzel haggled over the price, during which he and Makensie gleaned the information that the *Queen Bess* carried fourteen eighteen-pound carro-nades and two long nine-pounders, with a crew of about two hundred men. She lacked the clipper lines of the *Raven*, which would prove a point for Captain Hammond, who never risked a fight where flight was possible.

The store of Hans Schneider was still open when Wentzel and Makensie stopped in front of the building. In a little office in the rear of the store a candle could be seen burning upon a desk at which sat a man of short stature, straight brown

hair, and eyes that were set beneath shaggy eyebrows. His beard was cropped short, while a flowing moustache had an odd caper of going up against his nose as he talked.

Wentzel greeted the merchant in Dutch, and the conversation was carried on in that language.

"And what have you to sell?" asked Schneider, and the moustache caressed the nose.

"This," cried Wentzel, and he produced the ring.

"Hush! Where's Hammond?"

"Just outside the harbor up the coast."

"They say he chased the *Katrina* across the sea," and the merchant laughed in great glee, though scarcely a sound escaped his lips, and again the moustache caressed the nose.

"Yes, we kept the old sea bird busy," replied Wentzel.

"Listen! the *Warwick* will be loaded ready to clear in two days. She belongs to Cook, and is bound for London. Cargo of furs. Tell Hammond to put a crew aboard of her and run into Cherbourg or Havre. Great market there, and money in it. These American furs are much in demand in France just now. Carson beat me on the purchase, but if you fellows will do your part I can get my share all right."

And once more the moustache caressed Hans Schneider's nose, and he laughed silently.

"How long has the *Queen Bess* been in the harbor?"

"Three days," replied the Dutch merchant. "Slow old tub, you can easily keep out of her way."

A list of vessels to leave port, and those reported bound for American ports was given to Wentzel, and after a few minutes spent over a flagon of ale the pair of pirates crossed the street, jumped into their boat, and were soon heading down the Narrows under the cover of the darkness. The sun was an hour high when the men reached the *Raven's* side. Wentzel was closely questioned by Captain Hammond, who expressed great satisfaction with the result of the visit to New York, then poured out a glass of wine for each man.

"The greedy Dutchman wants the lion's share of the spoils," soliloquized Captain Hammond, after the sailors had left the cabin, "but I'll take due care of him and his greed when the time comes. Cherbourg or Havre, hey? He wants me to run my neck into the halter sure. But I'll get the ships all right."

CHAPTER VI.

EVIL SPIRITS OF THE DEEP.

THE wind was blowing a five-knot breeze from the west two days later when the picket boats of the *Raven* outside of the cove signalled a sail in sight outward bound. It was the frigate *Queen Bess*, and two miles astern was the merchantman *Warwick*. A half hour later the *Raven*, with all sail set and flying the American flag, plowed the waters of the Atlantic Ocean with her bow pointed southward. Ten miles to leeward was the *Warwick* and her convoy.

"Who are you?" was the query run up by the *Queen Bess*.

"The *General Wayne*, of Baltimore," was the reply, and the *Raven* sped on.

"Are we going to run away from that Britisher?" asked Jacques, with the natural antipathy to the English of the French people.

"Begorrah, Mister LaCromie," replied the Irishman, to whom the question was directed, "Captain Hammond niver cares for too close an

acquaintance wid sich craft, but yees will see some fun afore we lave that spalpeen behind the frigate."

The *Raven* continued on her course until the hulls of the vessels sank below the horizon, and only the sails were visible.

"Ready to go about!" came the order sharp and clear.

"Hard aport your helm!"

The great spars swung like clockwork in unison, the spanker bellied out with the wind astern, a spinnaker swung out from the mizzenmast, and the *Raven* stood east, in a course parallel with the topsails of the ships that loomed above the northern horizon. As the twilight settled over the waters the bow of the pirate bark was turned northeast. She set no lights, and the order was given for no loud conversation. At six bells the lookout announced:

"Lights on the port bow!"

The *Raven* was sailing with all sail set, and when eight bells sounded from the frigate she was only two miles from the *Queen Bess*. The *Warwick* was outsailing the frigate, for she was three miles in the lead, and with the steady breeze was evidently slowly gaining on the war ship. The *Raven*, unseen by either vessel, sailed in a parallel course for over an hour, then stood off on a star-

board reach. The time to strike had not come. When morning dawned a sail on the horizon nearly twenty miles to the southeast was visible to the merchantman and the frigate.

The wind shifted to the south during the day, then to the east, but sank to a four-knot breeze when night came.

Four bells sounded and again came the sharp command:

“Ready to go about!”

The *Raven* swung upon her keel like a thing with human intelligence, and on into the darkness in a course a few points east of north she sped over the billows, her decks cleared for action, with the starboard watch on duty. Three hours passed and the message was sent from the lookout to Captain Hammond:

“Starboard lights dead ahead!”

The *Raven* veered to due northeast and kept on her course until she had reached a point two miles off the starboard quarter of the *Warwick*. Five miles astern the lights of the frigate glimmered over the waves.

“McGonigle,” commanded the captain, “pass the word all hands armed on deck.”

Noiselessly the crew came up the companion-way, their shadowy forms in the darkness looking like black demons coming from the pit upon some

diabolical errand. Not a star glimmered in the heavens when the *Raven* reached a point two miles east of the merchantman, and the time to strike the prey had come.

"Now, Bell," said Captain Hammond, "pick your men."

The crew stood in two platoons across the deck, and in tones scarcely above a whisper the names of twenty-five men were called out. They responded by stepping two paces forward. The first man selected was Midshipman LaCromie. Addressing the picked company Lieutenant Bell said in low tones:

"We're going to board that merchantman. We must take her without any noise. Don't any man use his pistol. Do the business with your cutlass if necessary, but try and cover your man and silence him. We want no outcry."

Silently the cutthroat gang crept into the long boat, and soon it dropped astern into the darkness. The *Raven* immediately changed her course, and describing a short circle swung around the *Warwick*, and bore down towards the frigate. She was sailing before the wind and bounded swiftly over the waves. Captain Hammond stood by the man at the wheel and impatiently awaited the signal. Five miles astern of the *Raven* three lights twinkled just an instant.

"Fire!" commanded a voice that came out of the deep darkness, and the port guns on the pirate bark thundered a broadside as the huge sails of the frigate came abreast, and the crash of timbers mingled with the reverberation of the cannon.

On into the darkness sped the pirate, and with her deck splattered with blood, and amid the groans of the wounded, the *Queen Bess* put about and dashed after the assailant. A flash dead ahead and the boom of a gun pointed the direction the fugitive had taken, and the guns on the bow of the frigate belched forth an answer. For three hours the pursuit continued, but the duel was soon at long range and ceased, and giving up the chase of an unseen enemy, the *Queen Bess* put about to rejoin the merchant ship.

Soon after the silent crew left the pirate bark's side and launched out into the darkness upon that inky ocean, they came unseen under the *Warwick's* bow. From the foredeck of the merchantman came the low notes of a song as the larboard watch whiled the lonely hours away. A dark form came over the ship's side. Then another and another. Bearded faces leaned over the group on the deck, and there was the gleam of steel and the outline of pistols, while low but sinister tones commanded silence, coupled with the threat of death. Had a demon crew come out of the deep? The silent

forms moved stealthily to the hatches and closed them, they stood guard like grim sentinels before the cabin door of the slumbering captain. A pair of these sea demons took the wheel. Then three lights twinkled a moment from the stern of the ship. Far away in the wake a trio of little stars shimmered over the waters, then went out. Then came flashes of fire and a roar of guns was borne to the ears of the crew of the *Warwick*.

"The job's been well done, LaCromie," said a voice. "There goes the Englishman's lights around. He's after the *Raven*, and is not up to the trick that has been played upon him."

And two men laughed lightly, but it was not the laughter of merriment. It was as though evil spirits had tried to make merry.

And below decks the starboard watch slumbered, rocked in a cradle that with such a crew might mean their grave.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW PIRATE CHIEF.

WHILE Lieutenant Bell stood on the afterdeck of the *Warwick* watching the occasional flashes that came from the combatants far astern, Jacques LaCromie was holding a whispered conference with the picked men of the *Raven* on the foredeck. Among them were Wentzel and Makensie. Some instructions were given in a low tone, and Jacques walked aft, and a little later was followed by all of the sailors who were not needed for guard duty.

"We're going to Cuba before we go to Cherbourg," said Jacques to Bell.

"Who said so?" queried Bell.

"I say so," was the haughty reply.

"You?" sneered Bell.

"Bell, I'm the commander of this ship, and propose to have my orders obeyed," and Jacques drew his sword.

As if by magic the picked men of the *Raven* crowded about the two officers.

"These are my men," said Jacques, and instantly cutlasses flashed and the cry rang out:

"LaCromie!"

"You have betrayed me," said Bell, bitterly.

Jacques made no reply, but extended his sword and the pirate crew placed their cutlasses upon the blade.

"You take the oath?" asked the new commander.

"We do," responded the crew.

"Lieutenant Bell," said Captain LaCromie, addressing the astonished executive officer of the *Raven*, "you may ship as an officer aboard this ship. If not, you will be set adrift with the crew of the *Warwick* at sunrise."

"Turn him adrift, begorrah," called out Boatswain McGonigle.

"Aye, aye," yelled the crew.

"Hang him to the yardarm!" cried another, and the men gave instant assent to the proposition.

"No, no, men," replied Captain LaCromie. "We'll not take his life; not now. Put him in irons," and the order was quickly obeyed, and in no gentle manner.

The bow of the *Warwick* was turned southward, and under the influence of the east wind that was still blowing stiffly, she sped on her course. The

pirate career of Captain Jacques LaCromie had begun.

Captain Wollersheim awakened to find himself a prisoner and his ship a pirate prize. At sunrise he was waited upon by the new commander of the *Warwick*, who with great sang froid told of the misfortune that had befallen him and his crew.

"Captain Wollersheim," said Jacques, saluting with mock ceremony, "it becomes necessary for me to inform you that this is my ship. Sorry to part with such good company, but we will be under the necessity of reducing the size of this crew."

"Who are you?" demanded the astonished mariner.

"I am Captain LaCromie, and I took the opportunity to call last night while you were asleep. I have been looking for a good ship, and this is very much to my liking. No harm has come to the men on the larboard watch, and the notion that we propose to butcher you is very much out of the way. You will please let me have the keys to all of the lockers, captain."

The *Warwick's* late commander pointed gloomily to the table where a bunch of keys lay, and sitting upon the side of his berth, buried his head in his hands and groaned aloud.

"Where was the *Queen Bess* and what was she

doing when you got aboard of this ship?" he asked after a few minutes of silence, during which Captain LaCromie was examining the lockers.

"She was kept busy with some other company," was the gay reply, "and I did not have time for two social calls in one night, and as she was not going my way we were compelled to part company. You are well fixed with cash and wines, two requisites for good cheer aboard ship. Mess will be served by the ship's cook, and we will then want to see you all on deck." And with this Captain LaCromie left the cabin.

An hour later the officers and crew of the *Warwick* were called on deck and ranged along the ship's side. Captain LaCromie addressed them.

"Any of the men who will volunteer with us I will take. I promise you plenty of money and as much excitement as you wish."

He paused, and five of the *Warwick's* sailors stepped out and walked towards the young commander.

"Bell," said LaCromie, "you did not think my time would come so soon, or come at all when you and Hammond played the sneak when I won the duel. You could have stopped the indignity that was offered to McGonigle and myself had you wished to do it. You may have sole command of a boat."

LaCromie turned to McGonigle and a dory was lowered from the davits. The irons were taken from the lieutenant, he was placed in the small boat, and the frail craft was set adrift on the ocean, its occupant cursing the fate that placed him at the mercy of his secret foe.

Captain Wollersheim was placed in the long boat of the *Raven* in which the pirate crew had come to the ship, his officers and crew came over the ship's side one by one, provisions were put aboard, and they were cast off, miles from the shore. Not a word was said, the boat dropped astern, then became a mere speck upon the mighty ocean and soon disappeared from view.

Captain LaCromie and Makensie, his first officer, then began an examination of the cargo of the *Warwick*, which was found to comprise furs, gold and silver ore, many Indian trappings, hides and ship's stores for six months. The positions of the crew were decided at the brief conference before Bell was deposed and McGonigle at his own request was made boatswain. The necessity of armament was imperative, and it was resolved to cruise in the West Indies. Two weeks later she sailed under the guns of Morro Castle into the harbor of Havana, Cuba, flying the British flag. A liberal purse in the hands of the Spanish customs officer overcame any seeming irregularity in

the ship's papers, and Captain LaCromie and Makensie went ashore. They passed along the wharves for a square, crossed the government plaza, and soon were in the office of Carlos de Alvarez. Jacques addressed him in French and exhibited a slip of paper.

"Ah, my friend Schneider," said the señor. "He's a trusty man. But what are your wishes, captain?"

"What's coming this way?"

"The French ship *Versailles*. She has a rich cargo, but she is armed. You would have trouble with her."

"When is she due?"

"Should be here in about ten days."

Jacques sat in thought for a few minutes, and the Spanish official with keen black eyes studied the face before him. The scrutiny, though brief, seemed to satisfy him. The silence did not last long, for the keen wit of the young Frenchman soon hit upon an expedient.

"Señor," he replied to the question he saw written upon the Spaniard's face, "there is large money in this for all of us. You say the *Versailles* has an armament. Good! The *Warwick* has none, though she's a fine ship. I'll get that French ship, you sell my ship to the government

for a privateer. You can fit her out, paint her up and no one will know her."

Señor Alvarez's eyes sparkled, and the smiles chased each other across his face like sunbeams through cloud rifts.

"Good!" he exclaimed. But the shadows came again. "But we will need the help of Captain General Agramonte in this business. He is all right though if we approach him properly."

Alvarez dispatched a slave with a note to Agramonte, who sent a reply that he would be pleased to see the señor and Captain LaCromie at his office an hour later.

The Captain-General, a tall, well-formed officer, with fine military bearing, his breast glittering with medals and wearing a jeweled sword, received the visitors with commanding courtesy and punctiliousness. Alvarez was the first to speak.

"We have a plan here that has lots of money in it," and the smiles again chased each other across his face.

"You always have a scheme with lots of money in it," was the response of the high official; "but what now?"

"Captain LaCromie, young, but able,"—and the commander of the *Warwick* bowed low—"is here with a prize. A fine ship and a fine cargo. But

he needs an armed boat and one is coming—the *Versailles*, a Frenchman.”

“What is your prize, captain?”

“British, sire.”

“That has simplified matters. Where did you get her?”

“New York.”

The story of Captain LaCromie was soon told, and after an hour's conference the bargain was consummated. The Spanish officials were to have the *Warwick* and her cargo and Captain LaCromie to retain the *Versailles*, to deliver the *Warwick* at Matanzas if his plans were successful. The thieves parted company over a bottle of Burgundy and Captain LaCromie returned to his ship to mature the scheme for the capture of the French boat. His first step was to increase his crew, and a dozen adventurers were found in Havana, French, Spanish and English, anxious to accept any chance for the roving life of the sea. The last part of the plan was the assignment of an officer and a small crew of Spanish sailors to take charge of the *Warwick* as soon as the *Versailles* was in possession of LaCromie.

Nearly all of the *Warwick's* cargo was discharged at Havana, and with papers made out for Philadelphia the *Warwick* sailed out of the harbor. Out of sight of land her prow was

turned eastward on a cruise in search of the *Versailles*. The wind was light, and on the fourth day in latitude 23' and longitude 79' a sail was seen on the horizon. Four hours later the vessels lay within a mile of each other becalmed, with not enough wind to move the French flag that each ship was flying.

A boat was put off from the *Warwick* with Lieutenant Makensie, who carried a message to the commander of the *Versailles* requesting him and his officers to dine that evening with Captain LaCromie. The invitation was graciously accepted, and a half hour later the ship's gig put off from the French vessel. But few sailors were visible on the deck of the *Warwick* when the visitors arrived, and after an interchange of compliments the young commander led the way to the cabin.

Captain LeClerc, with bronzed face and long moustachios, bore the air of a mariner, and he found his host surprisingly well versed in matters of the sea and of his native land. Captain LaCromie, the courtier, was at his best, and the noisy merriment attested the bounty of the feast and the quality of the wine, but Captain LaCromie and his first officer drank sparingly.

"To the *Versailles*, the pride of the Royal Mer-

chant Marine," and Captain LaCromie raised his glass.

A cheer greeted the toast.

"To our most gracious host, a Frenchman of the French," responded LeClerc, and again the glasses clinked, but Jacques and Makensie looked knowingly at each other and drank but lightly.

"To the officers of the *Versailles*," was Makensie's toast, and the glasses of the guests were filled to overflowing.

"It is early, gentlemen," said Captain LaCromie with his polished manners. "Our crew share the toils and the dangers of the seas with us, shall we not have the men of the *Versailles* for a dance upon the deck of the *Warwick*?"

"Good!" exclaimed LeClerc, slapping the back of LaCromie in familiar fellowship.

"Monsieur LeClerc will permit me to send the message," said Jacques, with a low bow, and he left the cabin.

The gig of Captain LaCromie was soon on the way to the *Versailles* with the invitation, which was accepted with alacrity. Twilight had come and darkness was settling over the waters as two boats from the French ship came along the starboard side of the *Warwick*. Before the visiting sailors had reached the deck the *Warwick's* long boat, filled with armed men, pulled off silently

from the port side and disappeared in the gloom.

Three rousing cheers for the *Versailles'* crew greeted the visitors, and three in return came with all of the French effusiveness. What did it matter that but few of the *Warwick's* crew could speak the French language? The universal language of the heart found speech in action as the feet kept time to the fiddle and the pipe and hearts were warmed with the grog and the wine, though the *Warwick's* crew drank but sparingly.

"And now, begorrah, will yees watch a son of the ould sod take all of your fancy Frinch steps clean off the deck," and McGonigle stepped into the circle.

A sailor struck up an Irish jig, and the crew of the *Versailles*, merry over the effects of the drink, roared in unconfined laughter over the antics of the stalwart Irishman, who seemed to have as many legs as a centipede, and who twirled his shillalah in a veritable pinwheel motion. Then more grog was served, and some of the *Versailles'* crew, unsteady upon their legs, sought reclining positions upon the deck.

In the cabin the banquet of wine was still in progress, but Captain LaCromie graciously permitted his guests to drink the contents of the bottles he praised so highly. He stepped outside

his cabin for a minute, and the boatswain was quickly at his side.

"Bedad, captain," said McGonigle, "thim gentlemen from Paree are walking on eight or ten legs apiece. We've fixed them, sure as St. Patrick fixed the snakes in ould Ireland."

Out a mile to starboard over the waters, rippled by a light breeze, three lights twinkled, then disappeared, then gleamed for a few seconds again. Three lights from the *Warwick* gleamed in return and satisfied that the plan was working as directed, Captain LaCromie returned to his guests in the cabin. The tipsy captain took his departure a half hour later with many maudlin assurances of consideration for his gracious host, and he and his crew were assisted down the *Warwick's* side after much confusion and labor. As the half-drunken sailors endeavored to pull away, three lights twinkled on the *Versailles'* port bow, and again the lantern on the *Warwick* returned the telegraphic signal.

The captain's gig was lowered, and into it quickly sprang Captain LaCromie, Lieutenant Makensie, Boatswain McGonigle, and into another boat all of the crew of the *Warwick* that remained aboard the merchantman.

"Casca," said Captain LaCromie to the Span-

ish officer now in charge of the *Warwick*, "you know your orders—Matanzas?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Good night, good luck to you!" and the gig disappeared in the darkness in the direction of twinkling lights a half mile away.

As the young pirate captain stepped upon the deck of the *Versailles*, cutlasses were raised in air and the sailors, late the crew of the *Warwick*, roared out:

"LaCromie!"

"My congratulations to Mate Wentzel, who conducted the surprise," was the gallant response to this greeting by the crew.

"She was taken without a blow, captain," was the reply. "Only a half-dozen men were aboard of her, and all of them asked to stay with us."

"Swear them in," was the command of the captain, and the six men advanced, laid their cutlasses upon the sword of the commander of the ship and swore to obey the laws of the pirate kingdom.

And while the *Versailles* bore away, drunken officers and drunken crew, who lately manned the ship, rowed around looking for a vessel that apparently had been swallowed up by the deep.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JOLLY ROVERS OF THE SEA.

THE *Versailles* was a rich prize, and the day after her capture was devoted to a distribution of the booty. Captain LaCromie found his new ship, which he decided to call the *Leopard*, exactly to his liking. She had a tapering bow, pointing well upward as she sailed, riding the seas buoyantly, was rakish in build, and her spars lacked the cumbrous weight of many of the merchantmen of the period. She had been built for a privateer-merchant ship, to defend herself against attack, as well as to make prizes of defenceless ships, and for that purpose eight guns were mounted upon her decks for broadside batteries and a swivel forward. She was well supplied with ammunition and small arms, being in fact a French light cruiser.

Captain LaCromie decided to sail for the Delaware Bay and New York, touching at the Bahamas and points along the American coast. So

heading northward the pirate ship on the first day under the black flag was the scene of the freebooters' ceremony of dividing the plunder. Respecting no man's rights, thugs, if the occasion demanded it, yet the division was conducted with an air of rectitude that would have been imposing in any just business transaction.

An inventory was made of the money, the jewels, the silks and other articles in the cargo, the stock being appraised with an exactitude that often set at variance all knowledge of real values. This work was done by a commission which LaCromie diplomatically permitted the crew to select. The report was handed to the commander, who, clad in a new uniform of a French officer that formed part of the captured wardrobe, summoned the crew to the assize.

"The pirate's oath," he said, "is a pledge for an honest division, or death at the yardarm."

Then one by one the crew advanced, and each placing his cutlass upon the outstretched sword of the captain, swore that he had not secreted any of the common stock, and would take no more than his allotted share. In other words, every man took oath that he was an honest thief.

The division of the booty took place amid great jollity and ribald jests. Captain LaCromie, getting the share of the commandant, found himself

lifted from a farmer's boy to a position of affluence. Though revengeful in nature, he was not bloodthirsty, but his appetite for plunder was whetted by his capture, and all thoughts of a return to an honest livelihood were put behind him. There was no sail in sight, and the sailors were permitted to spend the hours in roustering performance, in which Boatswain McGonigle led. A woman's gown had fallen to the lot of that Dublin rogue, and he laid aside all of the dignity of his official position by appearing on deck in female attire. Other members of the crew took the cue and soon the *Leopard's* deck was the scene of an impromptu mardi gras, in which rude song and vulgar dialogue had a prominent part. LaCromie and Makensie sat on the poop deck enjoying the antics of the sailors, and as the freebooters' revelry continued the pirate captain said to his companion:

"This ship recalls my boyhood days, Makensie."

"How so, sir?"

The young commander, a boy in years, a man in diplomacy and executive power, looked out at the waves to windward for a minute, apparently lost in thought, then replied:

"I was born at Cherbourg, France. My father and mother were of noble birth and high position. I loved the sea, and at ten years could sail a boat.

My father was an army officer in King Louis XVI.'s service, and I was destined for the navy, and was sent to a naval school at fourteen. My father was falsely accused of treasonable utterances, and tried at Paris. I stood by his side as the perjured witnesses told their stories, and while he denied the falsehoods, his denials went for naught. He was adjudged guilty by the court of inquiry and sentenced to the Bastille. But this sentence was changed to a penalty worse than imprisonment or death. His regiment was paraded and Colonel Pierre LaCromie, my father, had the decorations he had bravely won in battle, torn from his breast, his sword was broken before his eyes, and the commander of his division said with great irony, 'You may go, Pierre LaCromie.'

"All our estates were confiscated, and that rascality was really at the bottom of all the false accusations. Banished from a land that thus repaid my father's gallant services, we sailed from Cherbourg for America. I was then seventeen, my brother Jean, a tender youth, is five years younger. We found a home in the southern part of New Jersey not far from a village they call Port Norris on Morris River, which flows into Morris River Cove on the Delaware Bay. The day we sailed away from France I swore to give my life to vengeance, and while I worked on the

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farm I plotted and dreamed of retaliation. One day my brother and I left for New York with a load of fruit and vegetables in a shallop we bought on Morris River, and which was called the *Jersey Blue*. We were overtaken, as you know, by the *Raven* above Cape May. My only concern was for my brother. I trust he reached home. As for me, I saw in my capture a chance at last to fulfill my vow."

Again Captain LaCromie gazed out over the sea and was silent. Then he said:

"Makensie, the name of the chief perjurer against my father was one Captain LeClerc, and when I saw the moustachios and lace coming up over the *Warwick's* side off Cuba, I wanted to run the villain through for the very crime of having that name or belonging to the family. The French frigates will have cause to hunt for us, but this head will never get under a guillotine. It will take the life of more than one French officer to end mine."

And rising abruptly, the commander of the *Leopard* walked into his cabin.

The *Leopard* put in at the Great Bahama for a supply of water, then stood northward along the Florida coast. Off St. Helena Sound, South Carolina, the pirate ship overhauled the Dutch brig *Leyden*, from Amsterdam. A shot from the

Leopard brought the brig to and LaCromie led the boarding party. With the courtesy of the courtier the leader of the pirates saluted the nervous captain of the Dutch boat.

"You have no need to fear for your lives," said LaCromie, with Parisian gayety, "but, captain, I'll trouble you for a glance at your manifest."

Bales of cotton goods, sugar, saltpetre, farming tools and utensils formed the cargo.

"I'm done with farming for the present," said LaCromie lightly, as his eye ran down the list. "Had a couple of years at it, and graduated with honors while away from school, so we don't want the tools. We'll take a few bags of saltpetre, and as we don't dress in cotton on my ship, you may keep the bales. But just let me take a look into the ship's chest."

The golden guilders were soon removed to the *Leopard's* boat, the pirate commander bade the captain of the *Leyden* adieu with wishes for a safe voyage, and the *Leopard* again headed northward.

And once more the appraisers drew up their accounts, and the division of the spoil was made with the formal ceremony of punctilious thieves who show careful regard for pirate laws.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FATE OF CAPTAIN HAMMOND.

AFTER luring the frigate *Queen Bess* into a chase that no serious obstacle should be presented to the capture of the *Warwick*, Captain Hammond flattered himself that he would soon outsail the British war vessel, overtake the captured merchantman out on the ocean, then secure the profits of the sale of the ship and her cargo through his confederate merchant, Schneider, at Cherbourg or Havre. He knew it would be a hazardous enterprise to follow his prize into the English Channel, which he knew was patrolled by war ships, but he was confident in his ability to outsail his enemies.

That was Captain Hammond's plan, but it was destined to be very materially changed. He was sure that the *Raven's* unexpected broadside had done much damage to the *Queen Bess*, but he was aware by her ready pursuit that she was not crippled. The casual firing from the *Raven*, designed to decoy the frigate into further chase, and

get her away from her charge, also furnished a target for the gunners of the British war vessel, whose marksmanship was far better than they knew. One shot whizzed into the rigging, struck the mizzen topmast at the royal, splintered it badly, and before the topsail could be lowered the strain of the sail brought the spar crashing to the deck. The falling spar struck the spanker gaff, the sudden blow snapping the halyard like twine, and the spanker rattled to the deck.

The *Raven* quit firing, her prow was turned southward to avoid being overhauled by the *Queen Bess*, and Captain Hammond devoted all of his energies to escaping from his enemy, in the meantime repairing the damage of the Briton's shot as far as possible. At dawn the weather had thickened and objects were not discernible many ship's lengths ahead. An hour later a leak was reported, and the pumps were worked, but convinced that it would not be safe to continue his voyage without repairs, Captain Hammond decided to seek refuge in one of the New Jersey inlets. Again the *Raven* was headed west.

It was necessary to keep the pumps manned continuously, but it was evident that the *Raven* could make port if the strain on her masts did not open the seam further. Though he could not take his bearings, Captain Hammond surmised that he

was near Barnegat Bay, but just as the low moan of the breakers reached the ears of the lookout, there came in quick succession from the crow's nest:

“Land ahead! Sail on the port bow!”

The stranger was to leeward, and was flying the British flag. Captain Hammond could but dimly make out the Briton, but was convinced that she was a merchantman. Sailing as they were he knew that their courses would soon bring them side by side, and he cleared his deck for action. The mists thickened and obscured the British ship for a few moments, but fearing he would ground if he continued towards shore, not being able to make out the mouth of the bay, he went off to starboard, and ran a course parallel with the shore. As the *Raven* straightened out, the Briton came out of the mists, close to the pirate bark, and Captain Hammond found himself alongside of the man-of-war *Plantaganet*, sent to scour the coast for the pirates.

One-fourth of his crew aboard his latest prize, and the best fighters he had, among them his executive officer, and with his boat in an unseaworthy condition, Captain Hammond faced great odds. He knew his boat was no match for the grim man-of-war, while his chances of escape were small, but the mists favored flight, so he turned

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the *Raven's* prow and headed out to sea. All canvas was crowded on, the pumps were double manned to keep the pirate bark from making more water, but as the pirate bark sheered off a flash of fire came from out of the mist, followed by the deep boom of a gun, but the *Raven* made no reply. Topsails and staysails were quickly run up on the *Plantaganet*, and she came swooping down upon the fleeing sea robber like an avenging Nemesis. Seeing it was impossible to outsail his foe, Hammond again headed for shore determined to make the inlet, beach his boat and escape to land, but the *Plantaganet* quickly followed the *Raven's* manœuvres, and the warriors were soon sailing side by side within easy range. Save for the single gun from the Briton the race had been in silence, but as the war ship swung about, her guns roared a broadside at the fugitive, and at the same instant the carronades on the *Raven* fired with telling effect.

Determined to prevent his enemy from reaching the inlet, the British ship pointed in for closer range, and her guns were worked mercilessly upon the pirate bark. Hammond cheered on his men, but his gun deck was soon strewn with splinters torn from the bulwarks by the terrific fire of his foe, his boat was riddled with shot, while the dead and the dying lay in their blood at the gun

trunnions. Side by side the boats sailed, while above the roar of the combat came the curses of the pirate crew and the cheers of the jack tars on the Briton's decks. Twice were the men shot down at the *Raven's* pumps, then a shell tore away the pump levers, the man at the wheel was blown into the sea by a cannon shot, the deck ran with blood, and the crash of timbers was continuous. One gun was still being worked aboard the pirate boat by a crew with powder-blackened faces, and they worked amidst an inferno. The orgies of Death had taken the place of the orgies of the sea wolves—the awful forces of judgment had been let loose upon the cutthroats of the ocean.

Amid this tornado of shot and shell Captain Hammond moved unharmed, as though he was leading a charmed life. Three men had been shot down at the wheel, and when the third man fell, and all but one of his broadside guns were silenced, he took the helm and resolved upon a last desperate expedient—he would ram the enemy and they would go down together. Scarcely enough men remained to work the doomed bark, but the helm was shoved hard to port, and the water-logged boat swung slowly around, but as she stood bow on her deck was raked by a hail of grape shot from the forward guns of the *Plantaganet*.

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Captain Hammond fell mortally wounded, but he struggled to his feet, grasped the wheel, and stood long enough to see smoke curling from the forecastle of the *Raven*. Then he staggered and fell close to the cabin door.

A white flag was waved by one of the few survivors of the pirate bark and the fire of the Briton ceased, while cheers came from the victors. In the forecastle the fire raged, a column of black smoke pouring out the companionway showing the progress of the flames; on the deck was a scene of carnage, while in the hold was a foe that was vieing with the flames in sealing the fate of the *Raven*—she was rapidly filling.

The *Plantaganet* stood off, then lowered boats to rescue the survivors, but when the Briton's cutters had rowed half the distance they saw the half dozen or more wretches clustered on the after deck nearly hidden by the smoke which was swept back from the forecastle. Then came a hissing, as though great serpents had taken possession of the bark—the water had reached the flames. While the *Plantaganet's* crew watched the fearful spectacle, the *Raven* began rocking, her torn sails flapping like gaunt and wounded wings in the mists, then the pirate boat plunged forward and sank, carrying the living and the dead upon her decks to their grave in the deep.

Far out on the Atlantic, in a dory, crazed by thirst, a frenzied man with bloodshot eyes, made a raving maniac in a day, stood in his frail craft, uttered a piercing cry that only reasoned dethroned can voice and jumped into the sea.

In a lonely cabin in the pine forest of southern New Jersey there came again to Bill Sanders the memory of a fair girl, sweet of face and gentle of manner, and the vision of two lonely graves by Morris River, in which slept the victim of a recreant lover and a broken-hearted mother.

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay," is written in the Almighty's tribunal.

CHAPTER X.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD.

CAPTAIN LACROMIE had seen the folly of the tyrannical government of Captain Hammond, and was satisfied that mutiny could only be averted aboard a pirate ship by making his crew feel that they shared a common lot—they must hang together or they would hang separately—yet he maintained discipline, and did not permit a familiarity that might breed contempt. He had made no mistake in selecting Makensie for his chief confederate in the conspiracy, and the executive officer in turn regarded the *Leopard's* commander as a born diplomat, the possessor of fine qualities, with all of the dash and valor of his chivalric ancestors.

Jacques decided to sail into the Delaware River and convert that portion of his booty that was still in merchandise into cash, then to leave on a long cruise. With all sail set he entered Delaware Bay. Off to the north glistened the sands of Cape May, above which the adventure that turned

the course of his life had occurred. He had sworn revenge for the indignities shown to his father and his household, but he had not expected that the opportunity for the fulfillment of his chosen mission would come so soon. The swift mutations of the months had placed him in command of a vessel wrested by stratagem from his sworn foes, and with this instrument he would work out his plans of vengeance. Three hours later the *Leopard* dropped anchor a few miles below Morris River Cove, the British flag diverting any suspicion that might be entertained by passing fishermen of the character of the visitor.

Two days later the *Leopard* anchored off Marcus Hook, twenty-five miles below Philadelphia, and the crew went ashore for the first time since the vessel's capture. It was an historic rendezvous for pirates, made famous by the visits of the notorious Blackbeard, the most picturesque villain who ever sailed the seas, and the little street back from the river a short distance in William Penn's oldest borough, still bears testimony by its name to the wild character of the orgies, for it is called Discord Lane, a bit of nomenclature that has adhered to it through nearly three centuries, despite the efforts in local enactments to change its title.

Captain LaCromie rigged a sail on his long

boat and visited Philadelphia, and on Delaware Avenue, as the Quaker City now styles its bustling and crowded river front business thoroughfare, found the trusty member of the Hans Schneider Guild. He was John Fogg, heavy, phlegmatic and slow of speech, but keen of intellect withal.

"You'll be under suspicion here among these particular Quakers, captain," said Fogg, "unless you take a cargo away. They are not interested in empty bottoms in this town. You've got your Havana papers fixed?" And Fogg winked in a way that was not phlegmatic.

"I'm not a stranger to these people," replied the pirate chief. "I've been in business here before. But I want a cargo of stores for my ship. I'm off for Europe on business."

"So," replied the merchant. "Bring your ship up, but keep your cutthroats busy aboard ship while you are here, and get away as soon as you can."

As he spoke Fogg handed to his visitor a copy of a notice that had been posted at the Custom House. It read:

Notice—The pirate bark *Raven*, Captain Hammond, a deserter from the British navy, was sunk above Cape May by the British frigate *Plantagenet*. All the pirate crew killed or drowned.

"*Plantaganet* in port?" asked Jacques.

"No, left America and gone back to report."

If any suspicion was entertained of the character of the armed merchantman that put into the dock at the foot of Race Street at Philadelphia, the next day, the affability of her commander dispelled any lingering doubt. The wily, though phlegmatic, Fogg took the French commander to a social function in the evening, and the urbane, polished and diplomatic pirate charmed by his ready wit, his perfect command of English, which he spoke with a fluency that surprised the company. His fund of anecdotes, his stories of the gay French capital, and well-put compliments to his partners in the dance won the hearts of hostess and guests.

Ten days were spent in the Quaker City, and the young nobleman's son became a social lion. He spent money freely, was fêted and entertained, and if his calling upon the seas was suspected, the rumors did not reach the ears of the watchful Fogg, nor did the cautious members of the *Leopard's* crew learn of any suspicions as they daily travelled through the marts of trade.

The night before his departure from port Captain LaCromie entertained aboard ship, and the *Leopard's* decks presented a gay and kaleidoscopic scene as the merry throng moved in the figures of

the dance or promenaded about the brightly illuminated boat. Yet as the guests drank the health of their host in sparkling wine, pistols were loaded and cutlasses were ready for instant use should danger or invasion come from any source in the festivities of that hour.

As he stood at his ship's side, uniformed in naval finery and girdled with a glittering belt and jewelled sword to bid his guests farewell, the bearded commander thought of a young Jacques LaCromie that had often come to that same wharf in a shallop with produce from his father's farm down the bay; but even upon the river front marts of the Quaker City no one seemed to notice the similarity of names.

It was a bold game this pirate chief played, but the quality styled diplomacy often wins where the valor of the warrior fails; but both elements were linked here, and the world applauds success, though it is not usually any too particular in the selection of the kind of success upon which it showers its plaudits.

As the commander and the *Leopard's* first officer sat in conference, and the larboard watch kept vigil that night, Captain LaCromie naïvely remarked to his companion:

"Remember, Monsieur Makensie, that sugar is

sometimes a better weapon than gunpowder, and does not cost as much."

The *Leopard* weighed anchor at sunrise and slowly worked her way down the tortuous Horse-shoe Channel of the Delaware. A few hours later as the ship moved out upon the broader waters of the head of the bay below the island that now holds the frowning parapets of Fort Delaware, there was the glitter of silver and gold, and the ring of metal—the pirate crew were in equity court in the division of plunder.

When the fishermen of Morris River Cove looked from the windows of their humble homes on the following morning, a beautiful ship with sails furled, a long black and red pennant streaming from her peak, and cannon peering from port holes, lay at anchor in the harbor. They recognized the vessel that two weeks before had moored at sundown below the cove; but the proud ensign of the Briton was not flying from her spanker gaff—a black flag, red-fringed, with a strange armorial crest, an eagle with a serpent in its talons, floated there instead.

No boats ventured from the cove, fearful of challenge from the sentinel whose guns commanded the water to either shore, but a group of excited people soon gathered on the beach and watched the dread stranger, whose coming was

unheralded, and whose presence might be the visit of a destroying angel. While they watched, a boat was lowered and was rowed by a crew of intrepid oarsmen swiftly to the northern shore, and disappeared in the mouth of Morris River. Then the captain's gig put off from the ship, and the morning sun caught the drops from the oars, and turned them into glittering diamonds as the crew pulled toward the little settlement of fishermen's cabins.

In the first boat that left the ship was Boatswain McGonigle, who carried a box that had been entrusted to his care by the *Leopard's* commander. Picking their way along the edge of the marshes of a river a rude landing was found by the boat's crew, and back a quarter of a mile, almost hidden by the trees, was a trucker's home.

"Begorrah, that's the offing!" exclaimed the boatswain, and jumping ashore walked towards the house accompanied by two sailors.

They followed a path furrowed by wagon wheels through a low sandy tract, and before reaching the clump of pines in which the log cabin stood, the fierce barking of a dog announced their coming. A woman above the medium stature, with streaks of gray in her hair, opened the door as the men approached. Her face was still youthful in appearance, but there was an ease and dignity in

her carriage that did not escape the observant eye of the Irishman.

"Shiver me timbers, madam," blurted out the boatswain, "what in the name of all the saints at onst is the loikes of yees livin' in this wilderness fur?"

The woman smiled at the honest compliment conveyed in the blunt words, and replied with a French accent that was peculiarly musical:

"We're living here because we don't see anything better just now."

"But yees don't need to stay long," again blurted out the Irishman, his eyes fascinated by the face and form before him. "The loikes of yees belong in foine houses."

And McGonigle doffed his hat and essayed a low bow.

The woman smiled again, and the boatswain looked the undisguised admiration he felt. There was neither evidence of fear nor trepidation in her face, but rather of amusement.

"But whom do I have the pleasure of addressing?" she asked courteously.

"Bedad, only a sailor, mam, but I hope a good one even if Dinnis McGonigle says so himself. And may I be after axin' the same question of yerself?"

"I am Madame Louise LaCromie."

"And ferninst the right port I am, mam. An' here's the box which the captain—and the foinest man that iver walked the quarter deck. He sed I wuz to give yees this box wid his compleements. He'll come himself whin he's through wid thim French spalpeens, bad sess to thim."

And before she could recover from her astonishment, McGonigle and his companions were hastening back to the landing.

"Begorrah, Longdon," said the boatswain, as they hurried back to the boat, "yees know now where the captain got all his foine looks. It's meself that's glad of a chance to crack the pate of thim frog eaters fur sending a queen out of the country into this bog of a wilderness."

Two days later the shallop *Louise* returned from Philadelphia, moored to the landing in Morris River, and Pierre LaCromie and his son Jean hurried to the cabin home. They were met half way by the queenly wife and mother.

"The city is full of stories of a young French officer named Jacques LaCromie," said the father, "and I am heavy at heart. The same name as my handsome boy who went down on the *Raven*."

Madame LaCromie said nothing, but with pale face and trembling hands led the way to the house, and, removing a cover, pointed to a curiously decorated box, which bore upon the lid the

family crest—the eagle with a serpent in its talons. With hands that shook with excitement Pierre LaCromie turned the key and opened the lid. The box was filled with glittering gold pieces. Upon the money lay a note. It read:

“TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER: I will return and restore you to fortune and rightful position when I have avenged the wrongs that your country has inflicted upon you. JACQUES.”

“My brave boy lives!” exclaimed the mother, and she fell in a swoon.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BRIDE OF THE LEOPARD'S CAPTAIN.

BEFORE Boatswain McGonigle reached the farmhouse of the LaCromies, the captain's gig grated upon the pebbles on the beach on the southern shore of the cove, and LaCromie was the first man to step ashore. He saluted a little knot of villagers with great courtesy, assured them that the *Leopard's* visit meant no harm to the settlement, then passed on. No one recognized the bearded young officer. Approaching a young woman and her male companion, who were standing a short distance from the group, Captain LaCromie bowed low, and said:

"I've come to keep my appointment with *la belle Americaine, mademoiselle.*"

The girl started at the voice, and her face turned pale, then scarlet.

"Jacques LaCromie!" she exclaimed.

"The same, mademoiselle, and the suitor for your hand."

"What?"

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The fists of the girl's companion clenched, and stepping in front of the pirate commander, he said:

"LaCromie, the sooner you end this business the better."

"And so I think, Loveland, and without your aid or advice," and he touched the hilt of his sword significantly.

The taunt fired the heart of the pirate's rival, and unarmed as he was, he would have struck his foe had not the girl restrained him by stepping between the men.

"Bessie," said Jacques, "I have come to fulfill my promise and make you a nobleman's bride, to give you wealth, and bring you back a princess. You were angry with me when we parted, for this man lied to you."

Loveland's face flushed, and he sprang forward, but again the girl interposed.

"I fear no violence of which he is capable," was the cool retort of the pirate chief. "I will not be responsible for the conduct of the men in my gig if he should insist upon a fight."

"Do you intend to go with this man on that ship, Bess?" demanded Loveland.

The girl stood irresolute between the men. It was the old story and the old temptation. The uniform, the gilt lace and the speech of a courtier

indicated position and power upon one side; on the other was poverty and the dull routine of a fisherman's cabin. It was an honorable life, though humble, and its devotees unknown, and the girl would have been content to live in the village had no other life been opened to her, but the vista suddenly presented dazzled her eyes.

It was true that Ben Loveland had aspirations above the fisherman's life, but there seemed to be no prospect of any realization of his hopes. It was true that this patrician officer that asked her hand was a pirate, but love forgives and overlooks all sins except those committed against love itself. Before her lay wealth—she had only to reach out and take it—and what woman does not covet wealth and its attendant power? To stay was to link hands with poverty, though it was poverty with honor. Oh, opportunity, what a master of human destinies thou art! To this girl, knowing nothing of the allurements of another life, came the same tempter who whispered folly into the heart of Mother Eve, who had listened to the serpent, dazzled by the promises of the foe.

With heaving breast and tear-dimmed eyes, in which hope and fear were alternately pictured, Bessie held out her hand to the pirate commander, who stooped and kissed it.

Loveland silently watched the girl as the varying emotions played across her face, then as she made her choice, he said hoarsely:

"LaCromie, if Bessie Turner loves you more than she does me, then you are welcome to your conquest. But harkee! When we meet again it will be under different conditions, and you and your pirate crew will be wiped off the seas."

"That's a fair threat, monsieur," was the gay response. "If we so meet, then be it so."

They walked towards the captain's gig, and again Bessie stood irresolute. She looked across the beach at the clump of bushes where her father's cabin stood, and duty and inclination struggled for the mastery.

"Your father will be provided for," said her lover, and he held up a bag brought from the ship in the small boat. "I'll trust this to the keeping of my friend Banks," and he handed the money to a veteran fisherman as he spoke.

The crew of the gig saluted as the captain assisted his bride into the boat, then a hamper of wine and some trinkets as wedding souvenirs were left with the villagers. Captain LaCromie nodded to the coxswain, and his boat put off. The oars again dipped in unison, the sunbeams again transformed the drops of water into diamonds, and the wedding tour of a pirate's bride had begun. The

watching villagers upon the beach saw her climb the ship's side, and the fisherman's settlement of Morris River Cove had lost its belle forever. As if by magic a long string of gaily colored flags fluttered from peak to deck, a flash of flame and curling smoke came from the *Leopard's* side, and the rumble of a salute boomed over the waters.

The young commander and his bride were received in naval state by the crew. Drawn up in platoons upon the gun deck, dressed in natty uniforms were the sailors, and the timid glance of the girl changed to admiration as her eyes fell upon the ranks, and this was not lost upon the men. Taking her by the hand, the captain presented her to the ship's company, and cutlasses flashed in the air and cheers rang out over the water for the commander of the *Leopard* and his pretty partner.

Then came the song of the windlass, the creaking of the hawser, the sharp commands of the executive officer, the scamper of nimble forms up the shrouds into the rigging, and out on the big arms, great white wings spread their pinions, and the *Leopard* sailed out of the cove and stood down the bay.

In the richly furnished cabin LaCromie held his bride in his arms, and looking into the upturned face, said:

"Bessie, I knew you would come with me."

"Jacques," she replied, "I did not mean to be angry with you that day on the beach."

The crew were piped to quarters at sundown to attend the marriage ceremony. The *Leopard* still carried part of her stock of goods captured in the West Indies, together with certain portions of the trousseau that the gay French officer had secured in Philadelphia, and the bride decked herself for the nuptials. Makensie was deputed to officiate, and a ceremony was arranged, and out upon the ocean, with the waves playing the wedding chimes as they lashed the ship's side, the marriage vows were taken. Then followed the merry-making in which the crew drank to the health of Captain and Madame LaCromie in the wine the commander set out for the wedding feast.

But in a lonely hut on the Jersey coast a fisherman just in from the Delaware banks, sat with heavy heart and heeded not the glittering gold with which a sea wolf thought to heal the wounds that the theft of the ewe lamb had made.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VOW OF A KNIGHT OF THE BROTHERHOOD.

EASTWARD the *Leopard* sped on, and while the first portion of the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean was uneventful from a pirate's standpoint, the days were not passed in idleness. Captain LaCromie's naval training was made to serve well the ends of the pirate chief, for there was daily drill with sword and cutlass, rapid fire practice with the batteries, and perfection in handling the sail.

"I think we are ready for business, Makensie," was the comment of Jacques, at the conclusion of one of the day's drills. "We can fight or run away."

The presence of the pretty young bride of the captain had an appreciable effect upon the nimble movements of the crew, for she watched the drills with evident interest, and with the open-hearted frankness of her sex was quick to express her appreciation, much to the delight of the sailors. But the spirit of knight errantry was not born in

the days of the barons, for it has burned perennial in the breast of men in every age and every clime. Men will dare more for women's plaudits than for any other earthly honors.

But the observant members of the crew noticed that the roses were fading from the cheeks of the young bride; that she often sat upon the after deck looking out upon the vessel's wake, and tears would fill her eyes—tears that would still linger through the smiles that would light up her face when the captain came to her side, though her laugh would ring out merrily over LaCromie's good-natured badinage.

"The girl is homesick, bedad," said McGonigle to his mates, "an' it may be a long or a short wedding tower she'll have on this craft. Begorrah, it's sick I am meself to see old Dublin."

"They'll see you at the end of a rope, bo'sin," retorted a sailor, "the next look your friends will get at you in Ireland."

"An' it would not be the first toime me beloved country has kept me in a state of suspinse," replied the quick-witted Celt.

Four weeks without seeing a sail and still the *Leopard's* prow was eastward. Then came heavy weather, and for forty-eight hours the ship breasted the heavy seas in the nor'easter that howled through the rigging, and lashed the ocean

into a fury. At sunrise on the third day, while the sea was still running high, though the storm had subsided, a signal of distress was made out from the crow's nest, and off the starboard bow a vessel was seen laboring heavily in the waves. Part of one mast only remained, and from that fluttered the appeal for help.

Then came one of those contradictions found in the human breast, but which is ever the hope of fallen humanity. Upon fair seas the stranger would have been accounted a lawful prize under the unwritten code of the buccaneer, and blood would have been spilled to assert and maintain this doctrine; but a common peril forms a brotherhood that makes even sea wolves banish thoughts of prey.

The *Leopard* sailed as close as possible, and found a sinking ship, with two masts gone by the board, and men almost exhausted working at the pumps. A boat was lowered from the pirate ship, and LaCromie took command, and had plenty of volunteers. It required a skillful mariner in such a sea, but trained men handled the oars, with Boatswain McGonigle at the big tiller. Two trips were made and the rescue of every man was effected.

It was a French ship, the *Mayenne*, Captain Poitiers.

As Captain LaCromie stepped upon the deck of the *Leopard*, the black flag with the red fringe and the eagle crest was run up.

"Mon Dieu!" gasped the *Mayenne's* commander, "prisoners upon a pirate ship!"

"As safe, sire," responded Captain LaCromie, addressing him in his native tongue, "as though this minute in France. You are not my prisoners; you are my guests."

And as he uttered the speech the young wife of the *Leopard's* commander rushed into her husband's arms with many caresses, and a cheer went up from the crew.

Captain Poiters bowed his thanks, then turned to look for his vessel and saw a huge wave break over her bow, and the ship disappeared beneath the waves.

From Captain Poiters, LaCromie learned that the news of the capture of the *Versailles* off Cuba had reached France, and that a reward had already been placed upon the head of the pirate chief. The *Warwick's* crew had been picked up and landed at Boulogne, from which port the *Mayenne* had sailed for New York.

"I disliked to put Wollersheim overboard," said LaCromie, "but I'm glad to know that he landed safely."

A week later, just before sundown a stately ship

flying the French flag sailed under the lee of the Isle de Noirmoutier in the Bay of Biscay, and a boat's crew awaited the orders of her commander.

"Captain Poiters," said LaCromie, "your home is at Nantes. I'll land you at St. Urbain. Five of your crew, four Norwegians and a German, will remain with me."

With all of the effusive gratitude of the Gaul, the commander of the lost *Mayenne* poured out his thanks to his rescuer, saluted the pirate crew, and went over the ship's side to the waiting boat, which disappeared in the direction of the mainland. The boat returned at midnight, and the *Leopard* immediately put out to sea.

Under the rays of a dim light in the cabin Captain Jacques LaCromie and his young wife sat in earnest conversation. Overhead was heard the tramp of feet as the crew were getting the ship under way.

"Bessie," said Jacques, pressing her to his heart, "you have pined since we left Morris River Cove. Come now, you are too tender, I fear, for a pirate's bride."

She brushed the tear away, and with her arms clasped about his neck in a tender embrace, said with a sigh, "No, Jacques, I am willing to go to the ends of the earth with you, but——"

"But what, my dearest?"

She was silent for a few moments, then said with a sob: "But we are but lovers, Jacques. I am not your lawful wife."

"Did not we have the ceremony upon the quarter deck?"

"Yes, but no priest, no minister was there. Shall we not when we touch at some port repair to some parish house and there plight us in lawful marriage?"

Capable of ferocity towards his foes, LaCromie had a nature of equal tenderness towards his friends, and he kissed the fair face with great affection. Stirred by her grief, he forgot the stern calling to which he had sworn to link his life, and he devoted his attention to comforting the girl. Then he inwardly cursed his own entreaties that had seduced her from her home and friends, for he saw that she now felt the shame of her position keenly, that it was preying upon her spirits and undermining her health.

"Is not my love true, dear Bessie?" asked the pirate chief, as he gazed fondly into her eyes.

"Yes, Jacques, but I am still Bessie Turner, and thus wedded I am but brave Captain LaCromie's leman and not his wife."

A shadow came across the face of the *Leopard's* commander, and gently releasing her, he paced the cabin floor.

"Curse my fate!" he exclaimed, "to have taken such a vow!"

"Is Jacques LaCromie, who a minute ago protested his love, so soon weary of me?" asked Bessie, her head erect and her eyes flashing. "If so I will cast myself into the sea!"

"No, no, dearest, not that," he protested, again folding her in his arms. "You are my life. It was of another vow that I spoke."

His frame trembled, and the beautiful girl looked into his face in alarm. He unbuttoned his coat and waistcoat, then opened his shirt bosom. Upon his breast there glistened a golden cross, upon which was wrought a silver lily. Bessie gave a look of eager questioning.

"That," said Jacques, "is the badge of the Brotherhood of Jerusalem. While at school I was fool enough to take the vow of knighthood of celibacy."

The color went from the cheeks of the young girl, her eyes stared at her lover, but she said nothing. He tried to comfort this grief that could find no speech, but though her body shook convulsively, she simply buried her face upon his shoulder, while he smoothed her tresses tenderly with his hand. When after some minutes she raised her eyes to his, he gently kissed her good-night, and they retired for rest.

The larboard watch in the long and dark hours of the morning were startled by the presence of that strange visitant of the deep, St. Elmo's light, which sparkled for a brief period upon the mizzen truck, then disappeared. While the quartermaster at the wheel gazed upward for a reappearance of the phenomenon, he was startled by a figure in white close by his side. Superstitious to the last degree, as men who follow a pirate's calling are, the helmsman's knees quaked and smote each other as he gazed at the apparition. Through the gloom of the night he made out the form of a woman.

"Powers and saints of heaven!" he gasped.

The spectre moved toward the ship's side, mounted the bulwarks, stood for a moment with one hand grasping the shrouds, then with a wild shriek leaped into the sea.

"Heavens and earth!" yelled a sailor. "The captain's wife's overboard!"

A succession of orders rang out in the confusion of the moment, and in the midst of the excitement Captain LaCromie rushed on deck. The ship was put about and a boat was lowered, and above the plaintive wail of the wind the bereft lover called in vain the name of the girl who had chosen death rather than dishonor. The ocean had provided a bridal robe and a shroud.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BARGAIN COUNTER OF THE BUCCANEER.

THE first great sorrow was upon Jacques La-Cromie's life, but while affliction softens and refines some natures, the crucible of trial hardens others. It was so with the pirate chief, who became more ferocious in his calling. Men are quick to find a palliation for their crimes and their sins, and he placed all of the blame for his deception of his bride against his knighthood oath; and this but whetted the thirst for revenge he had sworn against his countrymen. Such is the facile reasoning that excuses a course of violence and folly.

Cruising off the Ushant Island a fleet of merchantmen bound south was sighted under convoy of the French frigate *St. Cloud*. Five galleons were under escort, the war ship grimly on guard in the wake. The *Leopard's* decks were cleared for action, and a series of manœuvres was begun to separate the boats. With the wind on the port quarter, and all sails set the pirate ship passed

aft of the *St. Cloud*, and as she bore down on her course the black flag was run up.

The Frenchman immediately swung around to give battle to the buccaneer, and as he did so a shot from the *Leopard* whistled above the *St. Cloud's* deck, and tore through the jib. The frigate replied, and as a shot struck the *Leopard*, she immediately got out of range. The war ship gave chase, but finding the pursuit futile, returned to the fleet of galleons. The pirate came about at once, went on a diagonal course, and the *St. Cloud* turned to head him off, but the *Leopard* fired a broadside and retreated, and as LaCromie's gunners fired high, the shot went rattling through the rigging of the foe, ripping some of the sails, the object of the gunnery.

The rigid drills of the pirate crew gave a perfectly handled vessel, evidenced in the repeated and provoking dashes of the *Leopard*, and the repeated successes in damaging the sails of the Frenchman, yet escaping each time without injury. All day these manœuvres were kept up, the pirate ship hovering upon the trail of the enemy like a wolf scenting its prey, yet keeping out of fair range of the huntsman by outpacing the heavily gunned frigate when pursuit was attempted.

When night came the *Leopard* stood out to

sea, and apparently had abandoned the efforts to effect a capture of any of the galleons. One by one the lights twinkled from the vessel of the fleet, and shut out from the vision of the war ship and the merchantmen, the pirate ship made a circuit and secured a position two miles in advance of the enemy's forward galleon, which was sailing a mile to leeward of the *St. Cloud*.

Eight bells were sounded on the boats of the fleet as Captain LaCromie stood on the deck of the *Leopard* watching the lights astern. The wind had decreased in force, but was blowing steadily, though the sea was not rough.

"Nothing but cutlasses and no noise, if possible to work it that way, Makensie," said the pirate commander to his executive officer as the boat's crew went over the *Leopard's* side. "Signal two lights if you need help, one if you are all right, then take a course due east until safe, then north."

"Aye, aye, sir," was the low response.

Silently, pulling with muffled oars, the picked men of the *Leopard* disappeared in the darkness, pulling toward the forward galleon, whose captain lulled to peace and security by the disappearance of the prowler, and the presence of the guns of the man-of-war, slept soundly in his bunk, while the crew dreamt not of the danger that was near. The boat with its load of sea wolves

rose and fell on the swell of the ocean, and as it came under the bow of the intended prey, the notes of a song, a song of the sea, came from the watch. The song was interrupted by a warning cry, but a strong hand throttled the sailor before he could repeat the call. Dark forms glided swiftly over the deck, and the little company of sailors who had formed the chorus of singers sprang to their feet in alarm, but were quickly surrounded by men armed with cutlasses and pistols.

"Make no noise or you are dead men!" said a low voice in very bad French. The faint light on the deck revealed gleaming steel, and the logic of self-preservation suggested surrender, a course the crew immediately took.

Swiftly and almost without noise the hatches were battened down, guards took possession of the companionways, and all of the crew below deck were prisoners, sleeping prisoners. The commander, a young Frenchman, with a carefully trained moustache and goatee, was awakened from a dream of home to find three strange men with pistols in their hands leaning over him at his bunk, and before he regained full consciousness his hands and feet were tied, while a swarthy pirate sat at his feet to see that he made no effort to get up.

A single light twinkled from the galleon's deck, and off to leeward an answering signal came. Then all lights were doused upon the deck and in the rigging of the merchantman, her helm was put hard down, and she stole away in the darkness. Cunning had again played its hand with success.

The galleon had a new guardian of the sea at sunrise. It was the pirate ship. No other sail was in sight, and the day was given up to looting the prize, which was rich with booty, with gold coin, jewels and laces. In the transfer of the cargo the crew of the captured boat did a large share of the work, assured by the pirate chief that no harm would befall them if this order was obeyed. Under this stimulus they labored lustily, but with evident trepidation that betrayed a lack of confidence in the assurance of Captain LaCromie. At sundown the galleon was dismissed, her captain and sailors congratulating themselves that their lives were not exacted as part of the penalty of capture.

"That young man LaCromie is too polite for his trade," said the galleon's captain with an oath.

"You might ask the *St. Cloud* if she wants a convoy," gaily retorted LaCromie, who overheard the remark.

"Begorrah, yees frog eaters had better stay out

of this pond," was the farewell remark of the *Leopard's* boatswain as the lines of the galleon were cast off, but his words were unintelligible to the French crew, whose education in Celtic metaphors had evidently been neglected.

But silks and laces were to be coined into legal tender, and while the despoiled galleon made her way back to port, the *Leopard* headed north for the pirate's trade rendezvous off the Connaught coast. Much was to be done to fit the pirate ship for a cruise in the English Channel on a further hunt for plunder, and while she remained at Clare Island a brig from the virtuous house of Hans Schneider & Company sailed away from the Irish coast with silks and laces for Rotterdam. The man with goods to sell at a bargain has in all ages found other men with the requisite cash. The bargain counter is not a modern invention.

But princes were patrons of the prosperous house of Schneider, government officials were its friends, hence no uncomfortable questions were asked about the going and coming of captains who went down to the sea in ships.

When the *Leopard* left Clare Island after her overhauling, it was for the purpose of harassing the French commerce in the English Channel, then to cross the ocean for a cruise along the American coast.

“French gold shall make my father independent,” soliloquized the pirate captain, as he paced his deck, and his ship headed south. His successes had turned his head, and like all easy conquests they lured him on to his fate. The glitter of gold was the *ignis fatuus* that danced before his eyes, so his vessel plowed the seas chasing the phantom. He saw only fresh prizes, and not the lurking danger as his ship rounded the southern coast of Ireland, and headed in a southeasterly course for the waters that wash the northern coast of France.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH GOVERNMENT TAKES A HAND.

THROUGH the English Channel, overhauling small merchantmen, sometimes setting fire to the vessels after sending their crews ashore, the *Leopard* roamed. Success emboldened the buccaneers, who figured in a number of narrow escapes from men-of-war sent to overtake this pirate, but superior sailing in a ship light and speedy enabled LaCromie to get away with but little damage to his boat. Once he was surprised by two frigates under the lee of the Guernsey Islands, and shots were rapidly exchanged, but skillful handling of his ship enabled him to get out of the range of the enemy's guns, then darkness came; but instead of standing out to sea he played his foxy trick of doubling upon his track, and next day sent terror among a fleet of five galleons, which he pursued into the Seine Bay, but made no captures.

Things were getting uncomfortably warm, and the *Leopard* headed for her merchandise exchange on Clare Island, where a week's orgies by the pirate crew put the natives in a state of terror. McGonigle was sent to the mainland for recruits, and a fortnight later with an augmented crew, the *Leopard* left port for another descent upon the French coast before going to America. The Channel was being patrolled by both French and English war ships, but LaCromie slipped through the line, and approaching the coast above Le-Havre at night, landed two French sailors as spies. They were Tonnillier and Renaud, two of his trustiest men.

The docks of the French port were busy with moving drays, and noisy with the rattle of tackle and shouts of stevedores loading and unloading the argosies at the wharves. Under the shelter of the fortress two frigates were at anchor, while small craft flitted about the harbor. The name of LaCromie had become formidable, and Tonnillier and his companion heard much of the prowess of this young buccaneer, whose exploits lost nothing in being retold in the sailors' cafés and boarding houses.

Bundles of silks, laces and cases of jewels were being stored upon the vessels at the docks, but the boat that won attention from the pirate spies was

a brigantine that bore the name of *Montereau*. She was heavily built, was of a tonnage that gave large cargo capacity, but the critical eyes of the pirates saw that she lacked the lines that indicate speed, a very distinctive feature of the *Leopard*. Many stevedores were at work upon her loading heavy boxes that bore the mark of the French mint, while a French naval officer and several government officials gave careful supervision of the storage of her cargo. Along the docks it was said the *Montereau* was the richest argosy that had ever loaded at the port. Tonnillier and Renaud applied for berths as seamen, but were told that the brigantine's complement of twenty-five men had been secured.

Two days later a boat came ashore at night from a strange ship that stood off the coast twenty miles above LeHavre, and the spies were soon aboard the *Leopard*. Seated in a cushioned chair in his cabin hung with the trophies of the seas, a jeweled sword with the cross and lily of the Brotherhood upon the hilt, Captain LaCromie heard the report of his emissaries from the French port.

"How now?" he asked as Tonnillier and Renaud saluted.

"A fitting quarry for the captain before he sails for America," said Renaud. "A slow brigantine,

the *Montereau*, full of money, is to go around to the Mediterranean."

"A whole fleet of frigates with her, I suppose?"

"Two, monsieur captain, are in the harbor, but we heard that they convoy the galleons."

"When does she sail?"

"She should leave to-morrow, if we learned aright."

At LeHavre the stevedores and sailors of the vessels in port marvelled much that the *Montereau*, so richly laden, should sail with so few men, but the government official said he was confident that Captain Combe was able to reach port safely.

The brigantine dropped down the harbor at sundown, but before she left her dock the naval officers and the government officials held a conference in low tones in the cabin with Captain Combe. That night a roystering company of men, who had made merry at Trouville, put off from the little town on the southern shore of the Seine Bay in two sloops, which returned at sundown, but without the company of merrymakers, who had made their stay so hilarious while at the little city by the shore.

At noon the next day the brigantine *Montereau*, escorted by two frigates, was far out on the

Seine Bay. Eight miles to windward was a ship flying the Dutch flag, apparently bound across the Channel. Off Cape de la Hague the armed escorts left the brigantine, no danger evidently being apprehended, and turned back towards Havre. The Dutch ship soon changed her course and stood down the Channel. The sun rose in a clear sky the following day, and the brigantine slowly plowed the sea on her way towards the Atlantic. But one sail was visible, and it was seven miles on the starboard quarter. While Captain Combe watched the Dutch ship the distance between the boats lessened, and when but four miles intervened, the ensign of the Netherlands was hauled down, the black flag with the red fringe was run up and the commander of the *Montereau* smiled grimly.

Staysails were quickly put in place upon the brigantine, but if she hoped to escape by outpacing the pirate, that expectation was short-lived, for the *Leopard* rapidly bore down upon her. A gun boomed from the bow of the pirate ship and a shot fell near the merchantman, but Captain Combe did not strike sail or heave to. Another shot whizzed over the water and kissed the waves of the *Montereau's* wake, but she continued upon her course.

“She’s a superb ship and she’s magnificently

sailed," was the comment of Captain Combe to an officer by his side, as he watched the *Leopard* rapidly cutting down the distance between the boats.

Coming within easy range the *Leopard* swung around, evidently about to fire, when, as if by magic a dozen portholes upon the *Montereau's* side opened and a dozen cannon roared a fearful broadside at the pirate ship. The shot plowed through the *Leopard's* side, and the unexpected act of the supposed unarmed merchantman demoralized the pirate crew, who were taken completely by surprise. Before they had recovered another broadside swept the deck of the pirate ship, and fifteen of the crew fell dead or wounded, Makensie being among the slain.

With death and disaster facing him, Captain LaCromie rushed among his crew, and drawing his sword, drove the laggards to the guns.

"Are you a pack of cravens now that you have to fight?" he roared.

Ashamed of their fright the pirates leaped to their guns and broadside was returned for broadside. The fight was gradually getting at closer range, and the work of the *Leopard's* gunners was telling, for one of the *Montereau's* guns was silenced; but she was still superior in the number of cannon mounted.

Blood was flowing over the decks of both of the combatants, but the *Leopard* seemed to have the advantage by her superior gunnery, when a broadside from the brigantine dismounted two of the pirate ship's pieces, killing a number of men, while many lay wounded upon the deck. His fighting strength impaired, LaCromie decided upon flight, but his ship's helm was disabled as he gave the order to go about. There is no thought of surrender in the lexicon of the cavalier, so deciding upon a desperate chance, LaCromie's voice rang out:

"Boarders away!"

Boatswain McGonigle acting as executive officer was the first to get away. Fifty efficient men remained, and dividing the crew into two companies of boarders, the pirates tumbled over the ship's side into the boats. Moving under cover of the *Leopard's* hull, McGonigle dashed around the ship's stern, but as he came in view of the enemy a shot struck the boat's bow and swept the thwarts to the stern sheets in a swath of death. A second shot tore a gaping hole in the boat's side, and the fate of McGonigle and his men was soon sealed.

There was a dash of 600 feet to reach the *Montereau*, and lusty oarsmen pulled LaCromie's boat. As his crew of boarders shot off into clear

water from beneath the bow of his ship he saw the fearful catastrophe to McGonigle's boat; but he urged his men on—he would die fighting on the enemy's deck.

The guns of the brigantine were now trained upon the single boat, and the withering fire rapidly picked off the pirates. Still LaCromie urged the survivors to row on. Cannon shot and bullets whistled about the pirate chief, but he was unharmed. He stood in the stern sheets directing the course of his boat, and in the midst of his command the stroke oarsman ceased rowing, sprang to his feet with a wild cry of pain, placed his hand upon his side and fell heavily upon the commander. The weight of the man bore the captain down, and with the sailor in his arms he fell backward over the gunwale into the sea.

As LaCromie rose to the surface he saw his boat sunk by the brigantine's guns, and the remaining members of its crew hurled into the water. Then the firing ceased, and a cheer came over the waves from the victorious men of the *Monterea*. But the undaunted spirit of the pirate chief was unconquered, and calling to two of his men near him, he began to swim towards his ship. One of the sailors sank exhausted, but the other followed his captain and reached the *Leopard*.

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They found five men from McGonigle's boat aboard.

The captain's gig still swung unharmed from the davits, and hastily exchanging their wet clothes for dry ones, they lowered the boat.

"One minute, Renaud," called LaCromie, as he saw boats put off from the brigantine, and the pirate chief dashed down the hatchway. He was gone but a short time, and as he clambered down the ship's side, smoke arose from the *Leopard's* hold.

"Pull away, men," he commanded, and the gig moved rapidly away.

Smoke came in thicker clouds from the pirate ship, then came a burst of flame, as though a volcano's crater had broken into eruption. A mighty roar rent the air, and the vessel seemed to be lifted bodily, then was lost to sight amid a dense cloud that rolled outward over the waves, and curled high in air, while myriads of small objects were hurled through the black curtain and fell in a shower upon the waters, across which a great tidal wave was seen moving. When the smoke had lifted, the *Leopard* had disappeared.

The gig was only a short distance from the ship when the magazine exploded, and was engulfed in the white-crested, curling wave, and the maelstrom that surged for a few minutes. The

wave broke over the frail gig, the craft was whirled about like a top, then capsized. LaCromie seized the gunwale of the overturned boat, but his companions were swept away in the whirling waters and sank. One of the *Montereau's* boats sighted him a few minutes later, but even at such odds he fought against capture. He was pulled into the boat and a cheer went up from the crew, which was answered from the decks of the brigantine.

Jacques LaCromie, the only survivor of the priate ship, was a prisoner of the French government.

CHAPTER XV.

FROM OCEAN TO PRISON CELL.

CAPTAIN COMBE received the pirate chief with marks of distinction as LaCromie, with dripping garments but defiant air, stepped upon the brigantine's deck.

"Only a Frenchman could fight like that, Monsieur LaCromie," said the *Montereau's* commander with a smile.

Jacques bowed in acknowledgment of the unexpected compliment and the air of the cavalier returned.

"Monsieur, the commander of the *Montereau*, made a hard fight quite necessary and he is to be praised for his victory, for he has met some bold men—my brave men, my sailors, who have gone to their death."

The deck of the brigantine swarmed with sailors in the uniform of the French navy and Captain Combe replied to the questioning look of the pirate.

"We took these men on at night out at sea,

We have no cargo, except powder and guns. We came out to give Captain LaCromie a surprise."

The pirate commander bowed and followed Captain Combe below deck. Though a prisoner, the imprisonment of LaCromie during the voyage back to port was of a very easy and honorable sort. He was permitted upon deck every day and only at sundown was under guard in his state-room. He sat upon the poop-deck during the greater part of the daylight hours looking out to sea and conversed but little. He had been caught by a clever ruse, so well planned that his spies did not suspect the trick—that the cargo loaded upon the brigantine at LeHavre was not merchandize, but naval munitions and armament. Twelve guns, all of larger calibre than those on the *Leopard* had been mounted and while the pirate ship excelled in speed because of her finer lines and greater sail area, the *Montereau* was more stoutly built and better fitted for battle. As Captain Combe's prisoner surveyed the deck and its appointments, he complimented the commander of the brigantine for the quick transformation of his boat.

A few days after the sea fight the *Montereau* dropped anchor in the harbor at LeHavre and taking a long and lingering look at the sea, the pirate captain went over the side into the waiting boat.

When it became known that the pirate who had caused such terror among the shippers had been captured and was soon to be brought ashore, a wave of excitement went through the city and the docks were soon thronged with people, who pushed, craned their necks and stood upon every conceivable perch to get a look at the demon who sailed under the black flag with the eagle and serpent crest. There is that in the human breast that pays homage to achievement of whatever sort, and the presence of the crowd is the tribute the world gives to any man who has won eminence or distinction in any calling. The world applauds success and is not always particular as to the kind of success to which it gives its plaudits.

A guard of gendarmes from the fortress received the prisoner as he stepped ashore and at the same time a cry of mingled surprise and admiration arose from the spectators.

"Why, he is only a boy!" exclaimed a woman, whose dress indicated that she was of the better class.

"The son of a nobleman who was good to the poor," said a voice close by him, and turning Jacques looked into the eyes of a sailor who was sitting with crossed legs upon the top of a wharf-post.

The crowd surged close to the guards and what-

ever the temper of the more respectable element of the throng may have been, the rabble gave very clear indication that its sympathy went with the captive. But it is always so. The heavy gate of the fortress swung behind the guards and expressions of commiseration reached his ears as he was shut out from the view of the people in the street. His escorts conducted him into the guard-room, which smelled of common wine and tobacco, and walked him up to a desk upon which a register was lying and at which an officer presided.

"Is this the pirate LaCromie?" asked the man at the desk.

"Yes."

"Your age, LaCromie?"

"Twenty-two."

"Married?"

Jacques started. A vision of a pretty face and form came before him.

"No," he said.

The officer wrote upon a slip of paper, which he handed to the chief gaoler, who motioned to the guards and the march was continued. The fortress was a gloomy prison, dark and foreboding. Through the building there was the vile smell of tainted air, that repulsive odor of imprisoned sleep. Accustomed to the fresh air and freedom of the seas, the pirate chief revolted at

the thought of life in such a tomb. Through corridor and staircase the procession moved and stopped in front of a wicket. Down twenty steps—the prisoner involuntarily counted them—the gaoler opened a low, black door and they passed into a solitary cell in which were a table, a chair, and a mattress. The manacles were removed from LaCromie's hands, the door clanged and he heard the decreasing echo of the footsteps of the guard.

Jacques sank upon the chair, looked up at the light that came through the small grated window and buried his face in his hands.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "Why did I not go down with my ship?"

Then for an hour the prisoner walked to and fro in his cell, involuntarily counting its measurement, then cursing the fate that had reserved him for capture. Crowding upon his thoughts came visions of the far-away home across the sea, of the fateful day he had turned the prow of the shallop southward, of his courtship upon the beach, the loss of his bride—then a dark spectre intervened.

"And now for my head the guillotine!" he exclaimed.

Shut up with such thoughts the solitary prisoner fretted in his narrow cage. On the morning of the fourth day the echo of footsteps came

faintly to his cell, then were heard upon the staircase and stopped before his door. Once more the manacles were placed upon his wrists and he was bidden to accompany the soldiers. Up the stairs, out the wicket, through the corridors, the procession led and stopped once more in the guard-room that smelled more noticeably than before of cheap wine and worse tobacco. The officer at the desk wrote for a minute upon a paper and handed it to the captain of the guard, saying:

“This man goes to Paris.”

Mounted upon horses, the cavalcade clattered out of LeHavre. To Jacques the few days' confinement in the fortress was a horrible nightmare, but he knew that unless he could make his escape, similar, if not worse, imprisonment awaited him at LaForce or at the Bastille, with death as the finale. The brief opportunity to breathe the fresh air was a boon, but he was too carefully guarded to permit of the possibility of eluding his captors and he no longer had pirate gold, often the open sesame for men of his craft and many other callings. Through Rouen, Chars, and village after village the soldiers moved, sleeping at night upon straw in some loft or beneath the trees, and on the fourth day, after long and hard spurring over lonely roads, often going until darkness overtook them—Paris was reached.

Across a drawbridge over a deep ditch into a building of massive stone walls and eight great towers went the cavalcade. They were at the Bastile.

The paper given to the captain of the guard at LeHavre was handed to an officer. Through gloomy vaults, where daylight had never shone, past cages in which were ghosts of humanity and dark dens in which spectres of men were encased, the turnkey led the prison gendarmes with the pirate chief. Down flights of steps into cavernous depths, then up again upon rugged ascents of stone, the procession went and halted before a low door. The lock turned harshly and as the grated door swung open slowly as though loath to receive an occupant, the turnkey said:

“No. 46, South Tower.”

There was a worm-eaten stool and a table and a foul mattress in the cell. A small chimney heavily barred was at the side of the narrow chamber. Four blackened walls and a heavy iron ring, covered with rust, fastened in this masonry, formed the living sepulchre in which had been buried both the innocent and the guilty.

People outside the prison heard the clatter of hoofs upon the drawbridge as the guard from the fortress rode away from the Bastile to seek barracks for the night. A man of medium height,

sturdy of build and having the appearance of one who had followed the sea, stood near the approach to the Bastile. The captain reined in his horse and dismounted to adjust his saddle.

"Where did they put him?" asked the stranger in a low voice.

"In No. 46, South Tower," replied the captain, vaulting upon his horse and rejoining his soldiers.

"No. 46, South Tower," murmured the other, as he disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SENTENCE OF THE PIRATE CHIEF.

LONG days and longer nights came and went to the pirate prisoner in his vermin-haunted cell, but his spirit was undaunted and he awaited his doom with a growing fierceness of temperament and a sort of savage anticipation of the day when officialdom would gloat over his gory head. He lived his trial in imagination and daily pictured his position before the tribunal. After a full month of waiting the guard of gendarmes stood before his cell door one morning, the rusty bolt was shoved back and manacled the prisoner walked between files of his captors.

His trial, if such the proceeding could be called, was a mere farce, but Jacques marvelled that even this formality should be accorded. Eager eyes strained around pillars as he was brought into the courtroom to get a sight of him; people stood upon tiptoe and upon ledges, only to see a young man, not quite three and twenty, with sunburned

cheeks, upon which the prison pallor had begun to set. Dark eyes flashed from an attractive looking, almost boyish face. His form was tall, muscular and erect and a murmur of admiration ran around the room.

Was this the terror of the seas, upon whose head a price had been set?

With infinite reiteration and legal jingle of high-sounding phrases, the indictment denounced him as a traitor to the prince, our Sovereign Lord the King by reason of predatory war upon the high seas, by murder, arson and so forth.

Jacques expected no mercy and pleaded for none. The government that thus charged him with a multiplicity of crimes had wronged his father, blighted his life, and the son thus arraigned gloated in the fact that he had made what he regarded as malevolent powers feel his retribution. Thus he reasoned. His notion of equity was revenge.

"What is your name?" asked the public prosecutor.

"Jacques LaCromie."

"What is your occupation?"

"Pirate!" almost hissed the accused; and the answer caused a sensation in the courtroom.

"You have robbed upon the high seas?"

"I have taken from rich bandits who plundered

the poor on land," was the ready retort. "They were fair prizes."

Again was there a sensation and order was restored in the courtroom with some difficulty.

"You are a son of Pierre LaCromie, formerly of the Royal Guards?"

"I am, sire. A good man and true, who was better than his betrayers."

The public prosecutor entered complaint to the court of what he termed the impudent replies of the prisoner at the bar and asked for conviction as a confession of guilt had been made by the accused.

Jacques entered no protest, though no other witnesses were called, nor was any specific offense alleged, and evinced no emotion when the sentence of death was pronounced. Then he was led back to his gloomy cell.

The long night passed and each hour of the day that came he waited for the call of the executioner. Another and still another day and night went by and he wondered that the exaction of the penalty was so long delayed. The fourth day came and upon a slip of paper he wrote that his death would take place on the eleventh of July, 1789, but the night came and the glittering knife of the gaunt headsman had not yet done its bloody work. Midnight, but sleep had fled and a terri-

ble desire seized him to escape, but he was in a living tomb. One o'clock. Two, three—what was that? Outside the gloomy walls of his prison there came faintly to his ears the ringing of bells, as though in wild alarm. Then came drum-beats and the noise of bells and drums was drowned by the roar of human voices. Above the din he could distinguish one cry that came clear and distinct, yet faintly to his ears:

“The Bastile! the Bastile!”

The booming of cannon and the rattle of musketry added to the fearful noises, as though St. Antoine had been transformed into a great sea, whose turbulent breakers were dashing against the rocky shore of the prison. And what was the mighty tempest whose mutterings penetrated to the cell of Jacques LaCromie and other prisoners in the Bastile? Had the last day, the Day of Judgment, about which he had learned from his noble and pious mother, come?

Outside of the gloomy walls, the castellated inquisition of tyranny, was a whirlpool of raging waters, a human sea, swept by an irresistible tempest of wrath, hatred and the awful thirst for revenge. It was a sea of black and turbulent waves whose depths were yet to be fathomed and whose forces were to be spelled in livid letters. It was a remorseless sea with weird and terrible voices

that cried for blood. It was again as though the great lake of the bottomless pit had poured its fire and brimstone over the dark waves into St. Antoine and a legion of furies had taken possession of the streets about the Bastile.

Four fearful days and nights the billows rolled against the eight great towers. Men, powder begrimed, worked at the guns, a score ready to take the place of every man who fell wounded, dead or exhausted. Hundreds of muskets belched forth at the defenders within. Behind wagons for barricades and from every vantage point the assailants hurled their shot and poured their musketry fire; but still the drawbridge was in the hands of the enemy and the moat lay between the defenders and the turbulent human sea.

Inside his cell the pirate chief, doomed to the guillotine, heard the roar of the breakers and fretted that he was powerless to take part in the scenes he pictured to himself were being enacted without. While he listened there was a lull in the tempest. Then came a roar as though volcanic forces had burst into eruption.

The drawbridge across which many a victim of royal hatred and dislike had been led to a living death, was lowered and across this the human sea swept in a mighty wave, its crest running into the courtyard, then the tide rising until a multitude

of waters filled the building. Knives flashed, torches lighted up the dim corridors, everywhere was maniacal exultation and deafening noise. A thousand incoherent cries filled the air, but the one that was most taken up was:

“The prisoners! the prisoners!”

At the head of this terrible host, at least the foremost man across the drawbridge, was a bearded peasant, who ran his long knife against the breast of a turnkey and said the life of every man in the building would be forfeit if a single nook in the Bastille was left unrevealed. Then he was swept on by the sea behind him. The turnkey was hurled against the wall as though he was but a chip on the crest of this wave and pressed against him was a form with a sunburned face, a stoutly built frame and the appearance of a seafaring man.

“Take me to No. 46, South Tower!” he demanded, holding a pistol to the head of the turnkey.

“Follow me,” was the reply.

Through the gloomy vaults and past the hideous doors of the dark dens and cages the guide led the way. Up through the corridors came the subdued noises of the tempest. The turnkey stopped at a low door, the key grated harshly in the lock and a voice called into the cell to the form outlined by the flashing torch:

“Captain LaCromie!”

The pirate chief approached as the door swung open and fell upon the neck of the seafaring man in a warm embrace.

“Captain Poiters!” was all he could say.

“The man you rescued at the risk of your life,” said the commander of the lost *Mayenne*. “You saved me to my wife and my family. You saved me to my country to help in this glorious day!” and in his excitement, Captain Poiters snatched his cutlass from his belt and waved it in the air. “The Bastile has fallen and you are free!”

CHAPTER XVII.

A CAVALIER OF THE REPUBLIC.

DAZED by the unexpected character of his release, Jacques LaCromie followed the turnkey and Captain Poitiers up the stone staircase like one still under the influence of a nightmare. The roar of voices grew louder as they moved along the gloomy avenues of the prison and soon Jacques found himself amid a wild, jostling, surging throng, the jangle of voices filling the vaults of the Bastile with ominous notes.

Gory trophies, still dripping with blood, were being carried upon pikes, while a forest of gesticulating arms, flashing knives and spears, stretched out before his vision. Though of noble birth and association and his sympathies naturally with the patrician class, the injustice to his father, the result of official cabal, had driven him to the common people. Irresistibly he was drawn into the popular maelstrom which had the Bastile for its vortex that memorable day in July, and

he was seized with the contagion of the hour which had for its one thought—Vengeance.

The slaughter of the leading defenders of the Bastille gave the mob additional taste for blood and scenes of horror from which the pirate chief recoiled were enacted before his eyes. A highwayman of the sea though he had been, he had respected life, save in the case of Lieutenant Bell, of whose crime he knew, and the wanton massacre he now saw in Paris led him to the belief that he had but escaped one danger to be hurled into another.

While he moved with the throng, he caught sight of a figure in a gray coat and red decorations being borne along on the wave of humanity. For a moment the face was raised. It was Delauney, the governor of the state prison that had fallen that day. From all sides stabs were aimed at the grim old officer, who fell on the steps of the Hotel de Ville and a fury with long streaming hair severed his head with her knife and waved it aloft.

A flash of fire and a roar of musketry came from the building and the crowd, for the moment panic-stricken, trampled scores to death in retreat. But the flash of bayonets and the glitter of muskets was seen a square away and a battalion of soldiers came on a double-quick. A howl of rage and hatred greeted their coming, but the tempest

that had revenge for its note rose again as the soldiers, instead of charging upon the mob, returned the fire from the Hotel de Ville.

"Vive la Republique!" yelled a voice and the mob took up the cry.

There was a crash of glass as the soldiers directed a second volley at the building, but an answering fusillade made the attacking party recoil and an officer who was leading the attack staggered and fell mortally wounded. For a moment the troops were thrown into confusion by the galling fire and the fall of their leader, when a young man in uniform sprang from the crowd and rushed to the side of the dying officer. Taking his sword he called to the troops to follow. A sea captain in the van of the throng called out a name and the cry was taken up by hoarse throats:

"LaCromie!"

The troops were rallied and charging up the steps were followed by the mob. In the grand corridor of the hotel, an officer in the garb of the Royal Guards disputed the leader's way. A brief combat followed and the officer fell, pierced by LaCromie's sword, while the bloodthirsty mob surged over his body. And again were scenes of anarchy enacted.

LaCromie returned with the soldiers, who had joined the revolutionary party, and his exploit

won him immediate recognition in the organization of the National Guards. He had suddenly found himself a factor in an awful movement, an expression of vengeance that appalled, but which none dare decry. He would have stemmed the black and remorseless tide, but was borne upon it.

The panorama of events in the three succeeding years moved swiftly with the organization of the so-called government, but surfeited by the scenes of blood and sickened by the injustice wreaked upon helpless and innocent men and women, a longing filled his heart for an opportunity to strike a blow for liberty from the new oppressors. The old passion of the cavalier swept over his soul and he fretted more over this imprisonment of spirit than he did over his incarceration in the Bastille. Such were the sentiments filling his breast as the days of 1792 dawned upon Paris.

"Poitiers!" he exclaimed to the sea captain, at the home of the mariner, bringing his fist upon the table with fierce emphasis, "this hellish government is worse than any aristocracy France ever had. Marat, Danton and the cowardly Robespierre who skulks behind them, are worse tyrants than a whole race of kings! My heart bleeds for France."

"Hush, monsieur!" exclaimed the captain, hold-

ing up both hands in a deprecatory motion. "These very walls have ears in these days."

"And they may have tongues," retorted Jacques. "Are Frenchmen home-born slaves that they bow down to this demon the Commune calls liberty?"

"The head of monsieur will slide off like that," replied Captain Poiters, making a motion of the guillotine as he spoke, "if his words should pass out of this house."

"It were blood well spilled if for real liberty given," replied LaCromie.

"Many people think like monsieur," said Captain Poiters, "but few dare think aloud like Captain LaCromie."

The friends discussed the situation long and earnestly and it was ten o'clock when Captain LaCromie rose to go. Paris slept, but it was the sleep over which hung the pall of horror. Jacques was challenged by a number of sentries, but gave the password promptly and was not delayed. As he turned into the Rue St. Honore he saw a young girl, apparently sixteen years of age, in the grasp of two half-drunken ruffians and an abandoned woman, who were stifling her cries of alarm and appeal as they dragged her away.

"Release that girl!" ordered LaCromie, planting himself in front of the trio of captors.

A volley of oaths was the reply. A swift blow in the face that sent one of the ruffians to the pavement was the quick response of the captain.

"By heavens!" he hissed. "I'll make ghosts of all if you don't release her at once."

Drawing his sword, he struck the other fellow a blow on the arm. With a fierce imprecation the man rushed upon LaCromie, but staggered and fell, pierced by the weapon in the hands of the young officer. Seeing her companion badly wounded the woman fled, followed by the man whom LaCromie had knocked down with his fist.

"What are you doing here at this hour, mademoiselle?" asked LaCromie.

"O, kind sir, mother was very ill and I came out for a physician and was returning."

"Where do you live?"

"In the Rue des Chantres, monsieur."

"I'll accompany mademoiselle to her apartments," said the French officer, calmly, and they hurried on.

But little was said during the walk, but Jacques noticed that his companion was of a slight figure and once or twice as light from a street beacon fell upon her face, he saw that she had sweet and attractive features. Reaching her home he was about to bid her good-night when she asked:

"May I have the name of my brave rescuer?"



"I am *Lucille Renaud*."

"I am simply a captain in the National Guards and would have been a coward not to have succored a lady in trouble," he replied, with a bow. "And may I also inquire the favor of your name, mademoiselle?" he asked.

"I am Lucille Renaud. My father was with the brave and bold Captain LaCromie, of the *Leopard*."

"And a good man and true was Jean Renaud," replied Jacques quickly and with ardor.

"And did you know him?"

"Aye; I am Captain LaCromie."

The girl seized him passionately by the hands and in a low voice, but with much warmth, said:

"I trust no ill will come to him who this night has saved me from an awful fate. It was Francois Santerre you wounded and Madame Lizette, a terrible woman, was with him."

Pressing his hands again in fervent thanks, the young girl entered her home and Jacques hurried to his barracks. As he was passing to his quarters he noticed a guard drawn up and a few minutes later he was summoned to the commandant's office.

"Captain, bring the family of Colonel LeBlanc. They are at their chateau on the Bourg-la-Reine road."

The Colonel, a prisoner at LaForce, awaited his doom and the shadow of la guillotine was now

upon the other members of the family, for no greater crime than the knowledge that they were friends of the government of Louis XVI. The house of LeBlanc had been active in the persecution of Colonel Pierre LaCromie and now the vengeance that the boy had sworn was his at last. Jacques LaCromie's heart beat rapidly with conflicting emotions as his little band of horsemen galloped through the streets of Paris and into the city's environs. He was silent and kept well in advance of the detail. He reined up in front of the château, rapped loudly upon the door with the hilt of his sword and the summons was answered by a servant.

"Where is Madame LeBlanc?" he demanded.

"She is asleep, monsieur," tremblingly replied the terrified servant.

"Call her at once. I must see her. But first put some wine before these men."

The servant with lighted candle led the way to the wine vault, and bidding the guard, which consisted of a detail of ten men, to help themselves, Captain LaCromie directed the servant to conduct him to Madame LeBlanc's bedchamber. The entrance of the soldiers had awakened the Colonel's wife and daughter, who well knew the meaning of the summons at that hour of the night. Pale and trembling with apprehension, they

awaited the coming of the officer in charge. Captain LaCromie left the servant in the hall and entered the bedchamber and closed the door.

"Madame," he said, "I have been sent here to convey you and mademoiselle to LaForce. My men are now in the wine cellar—I took them there. You must fly at once."

"Monsieur, you risk your own life in thus shielding us," replied Madame LeBlanc. "But whither can we fly?"

LaCromie took from his pocket a paper and handed it to her and said:

"There is a passport to the coast. I have counterfeited the signature, but no one will know. In your flight you are Madame DeLorme. I will keep my men in carousal at the château, but haste."

LaCromie turned to leave the room, but Madame LeBlanc caught him by the arm.

"Brave sire, to whom do we owe this service?"

"It matters not."

"Pardon me, monsieur, but my husband?"

"I know not. I will do what I can, but that probably cannot be much. Haste!"

And he was gone.

LaCromie stalked into the wine-room where the soldiers, already under the mellowing influence of drink, were in high revel.

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"They have gone," he said to his lieutenant. "Two fair heads less for our gay goddess, La Guillotine."

Pouring out a glass of wine he raised it and said:

"Here's to Liberty, the Commune, Fraternity, Equality!"

A roar of applause followed the toast.

"Down with aristocracy and Louis Capet," he continued. "The oppressors of the people, the foe to law and justice. The National Convention forever!"

"LaCromie! LaCromie! the Marshal of the National Guard!" proposed the sergeant, and maudlin cheers greeted the suggestion of the elevation of their captain to the head of the army.

While the orgies filled the château with the noise of the wild revel, the women, aided by two servants, hastily gathered a few things for the journey. At three o'clock a pair of horses and a coach awaited them. LaCromie, who stood in the shadow of the vines that trailed about the door, bent over the servant and whispered:

"Do not disclose your secret until you are safely out of France."

While the revel went on, the coach disappeared in the darkness. In daily terror, with hopes and fears, scarcely sleeping, the fugitives traveled

towards the Channel and from Dieppe sailed for the Netherlands. As the shores of France grew dimmer, two women, a mother and her daughter, watched their native land fading away in the blue-rimmed distance, and approaching them the servant said:

“Madame, I have a message. It was given at the château by the captain of the guard.”

“And why did you keep it until now?”

“Because I was so instructed.”

“There is at least one brave spirit among the Commune. But what was the message he gave you?”

“It was this: ‘Tell Madame LeBlanc, when she is safe from persecution, that a son of Colonel Pierre LaCromie saved her life.’”

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GUILLOTINE.

PARIS was in the black days of August, 1792, a blood-red sisterhood of crime enthroned in the livery of Liberty. The flow of blood, the rumble of the tumbrils to the place of execution, the abandonment of the imperial city to the vices of the purlieus, sickened the pirate chief, who longed for the freedom of the seas, yet was held in the capital by a strange fascination. It was the spell the serpent throws over its victim before it strikes.

Louis XVI and his beautiful queen were prisoners in the Temple Tower. LaCromie had witnessed the removal of the royal family from Les Feuillants, he heard the low jibes and insults of the rabble and had he given way to his impulse he would have drawn his sword against the Commune. He heard the commandant of his regiment commend the massacre at the Tuilleries and its atrocities and he would fain have attested his

horror of the deed and the utterance by a combat with the colonel, whom he despised for approval of cowardly butchery. The coarse rudeness and vulgarity with which gentility and good breeding were everywhere assailed filled him with disgust and the work of the guillotine made him register a new vow. Possessed with a high purpose he heeded not the thought that his part in the flight of Madame and Mademoiselle LeBlanc might become known. He exulted in the rôle in which he had played and rather courted martyrdom than shunned it. He daily saw victims of the instrument of death gladly bend their necks to the knife in sort of wild intoxication, and he had imbibed the spirit.

Captain LaCromie was detailed at midnight in the middle of August to convey some of the members of the royal party from the Temple Tower to the LaForce prison. They were the Princess de Lambelle, Madame and Mademoiselle de Tourzel and a few attendants. It was his first close look at the king and his beautiful queen and the majesty and tenderness of Marie Antoinette challenged his admiration. A vision of his own mother, the stately woman who had been banished from her native land, stood before him and he longed to rush into the arms of the dethroned queen. The grief of the king and Marie Antoin-

ette and the sorrow of the separation from the members of their party, deeply touched the heart of the captain of the guard and he felt ready to die then and there defending the majestic woman—the first woman in France. He left the Temple a few minutes later with his prisoners a royalist.

“I will bide my time,” he said to himself. “The hour will surely come for the delivery of my country.”

The imprisonment of the royal family and the daily espionage that was kept upon them seemed to satisfy popular clamor and there was a lull in the storm, but it was only the prelude to a greater tempest. Everywhere the armies of France were being hurled back and the news of fresh disaster on the border sent the population into another frenzy—the Reign of Terror was rushing to a high tide—with the so-called government giving open approval to murder and publicly rewarding the murderers.

The crowds daily increased about the LaForce prison and insult and contumely were the daily salutations heard by the royal prisoners. It was the custom of the ladies to walk into the courtyard of the prison for exercise and fresh air, but as the crowd gathered in the streets was larger and more turbulent than at any previous time, Captain LaCromie halted the party one morning

early in September and urged them to forego their promenade.

"The Princess may place her life in jeopardy," he said.

"Monsieur is very kind," she replied with a smile, "but I fear no danger. We may walk safely, I think."

The presence of the ladies in the courtyard was greeted with hisses, taunts, insults and curses, but they had become so accustomed to such salutations that they heeded them not. Mademoiselle de Tourzel glanced timidly at the mob and advised retreat, but the Princess continued her walk. A coarse revolutionary song was caught up by the crowd and above the chorus could be heard the cry:

"Down with the Capets! Down with Lambelle!"

Then with a howl of rage that resembled the roar of hungry beasts, the mob surged into the courtyard. The Princess turned to flee, but was felled by a blow with a club. Then like a pack of wolves upon a wounded deer, the incarnate demons sprang upon the prostrate woman and cut her body to pieces, with many acts of savage atrocity.

With the onslaught of the mob, LaCromie called to his guard, but not a man moved. Dashing forward, he pushed himself alongside of Ma-

dame de Tourzel and her daughter. A gleaming knife descended toward the breast of the mother, but the weapon was wrested from the hand of the assailant by the bold and lone defender. Then the surging mass bore LaCromie from the women as though he was as cork upon the crest of a wave. He saw Madame de Tourzel in the grasp of a burly ruffian, and pushing through the crowd he beat off the would-be assassin. Again he was hurled back by the surging throng, but he regained his place by the women. As he struck the ruffian who had attempted murder, their eyes met and the recognition was mutual. He was face to face with François Santerre.

“Curse you!” hissed the burly thug.

Close by François stood a woman with a hard, bloated face. François pointed to the captain of the guard. The hag was Madame Lizette.

Then a pike was lifted above the crowd and with the long fair hair of the victim falling in curls upon it was the gory head of the Princess. A yell as though the bottomless pit had vomited its horde of devils rent the air, but while the attention of the mob was directed to the bloody trophy, LaCromie forced a way to the prison entrance for his charges and the door was shut and bolted.

In their exultation over the death of the Princess, the crowd surged out of the courtyard fol-

lowing the bearer of this fresh standard of the Commune.

"To the Temple!" yelled the mob and the yelling, shrieking demons in human flesh hastened to exhibit to the king and queen the ghastly proof of the fate of the beautiful and accomplished Princess.

At midnight that night, Captain LaCromie was called before his company, his sword was broken, his epaulettes were removed and before the clock tolled the hour of one he was a prisoner in a gloomy cell in the Conciergerie prison.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE EVE OF DOOMSDAY.

THE Conciergerie, dark and filthy, sheltered many people of gentle birth that night. When the guard entered with LaCromie he was first conducted into a low, vaulted chamber in which were prisoners of both sexes. There were tear-stained faces, other faces upon which the stamp of expectant horrors had driven away the bloom, and faces wreathed with calm resignation; but so misplaced did all this refined company seem in such a tomb that LaCromie gazed in surprise. He seemed to be among the ghosts of a distant past. To heighten the effect of the scene the company rose as the door swung back and the newcomer to the gloomy shades entered. The hour, with the misery and squalor of the chamber, made the scene spectral and unreal, accustomed though he had become to daily arrests.

La Cromie was conducted across the room to a grated door; he bowed courtously to the ghostly

company, a murmured "good-night, monsieur," reached his ears and the iron door clanged behind him.

The wheels of Justice, as the Commune defined the word, moved swiftly and no one had cause to complain of the law's delay in the administration of the Republic. Two days after his arrest, Jacques LaCromie was escorted to the Tribunal, where the judges, five in number, the public prosecutor and the jury that gave but one verdict, sat every day. All except the judges wore the tri-colored cockades. The jury impressed the prisoner as a prize lot of felons, but he was accustomed to the rule of such men in public affairs and to the rabble which filled the courtroom.

"Jacques LaCromie"—his military title was omitted in the indictment—was accused of being an enemy to the government because he had defended royalty against the citizens of the Republic. This was the head and front of his offending, though other crimes against Liberty and Equality had been perpetrated and were summarized in the bill read to the court and jury.

"Who accuses the prisoner?" asked the President.

"I do!" shrieked a female voice, and a woman sitting in the front row leaped to her feet.

A roar of frantic acclamations followed this in-

cident and the woman was motioned to the witness stand.

“Your name?”

“Citizeness Lizette Gault.”

With much elaboration and attention to detail, this virtuous daughter of the Republic told of the assault upon peaceful and law-abiding members of the Commune in the Rue St. Honore and the wounding of the distinguished supporter of Equity, François Santerre, a son of the Republic, and the liberation of a female prisoner they were escorting to LaForce. Exclamations of approval interrupted the witness and the President rang his bell for order, but the Fury in the witness box indicated her profound contempt for the bell and the authority of the man who rang it, which brought fresh plaudits from the rabble.

“Go on,” said the public prosecutor, as Lizette stopped to get breath.

“He has cheated the Republic of the heads of her enemies,” shrieked Lizette, and once more there was a roar of patriotic fervor in the courtroom.

“Take off his head!” yelled a peasant in the front row of benches.

“The prisoner notified the wife and daughter of Colonel LeBlanc and gave them secret convoy out of the country,” continued the witness.

But the climax of the accusation was to come and the Amazon in the witness box, flushed in the face and out of breath by the vehemence of her tones, paused to recover her strength, but the crowd was impatient for the recital and urged her on.

“Two days ago in the courtyard of LaForce he struck Citizen François Santerre as he was about to execute the judgment of the Republic. There he saved the family of the Capets from the just vengeance of the people. He’s a friend of Royalists—he sought to kill me—and to kill a citizen of the Republic!”

The voice of the witness rose higher and her gestures grew more vehement as she proceeded. The audience had risen and the rabble were standing on the benches and upon every place that afforded a view of the scenes within the bar of the court, listening to every syllable of the accusation with faces gleaming with demoniacal delight and interest. Through it all LaCromie stood calm and unmoved by the clamor for his blood. He was in a mental atmosphere unknown to this mob and he was the only cool and collected person in the courtroom.

“Our hands were—upon—the oppressors of the—people!” shrieked the she-devil in the box, “and he snatched them away! His head should go!” and

as she spoke, she made a motion with her hands in imitation of the descent of the knife on the guillotine.

A sound terrible in its timbre, a sound vibrant with murder, nothing articulate in it save the insatiate cry for a human life, went up from the rabble as the courtesan on the witness stand concluded her harangue.

There was no pressing need for further testimony and though François demanded to be heard, his voice was lost in the clamor for the verdict. Lest his own head be in danger and to further cement it to his shoulders the President extolled the virtues of Madame Lizette Gault, the patriotic citizeness, who had performed such notable service to the Republic. Then he ordered the jury to be polled.

Though there was no need for the conspiracy of felons styled by courtesy the jury to act upon the testimony, each member of the panel patriotically recorded his judgment against the oppressor of the people who stood at the bar. He was by birth an aristocrat and was by a very parity of reasoning an enemy to the Republic.

Jacques LaCromie heard unmoved the court's sentence—death by the guillotine within twenty-four hours—and the mob shouted for the next victim.

There was one man in that horde of human wolves who did not cheer or join in the acclamations. He was Captain Poiters. He knew there was no hope for LaCromie and after the sentence he quietly left the courtroom. He walked towards his home in deep thought, then he suddenly turned before reaching his house and walked rapidly to the Rue des Chantres.

"Mademoiselle Lucille," he said to the young girl when they were alone, "Captain LaCromie was condemned to-day. You must help save him."

"I, Monsieur Captain? How gladly would I help my brave rescuer, but what can a helpless girl do against the Commune?"

"Much. Listen! Where is Roland, your brother?"

"He is a guard at the Conciergerie."

"Just so; when can I see him?"

"I know not, sire."

"I must see him to-night."

"Where, monsieur?"

"Here."

The girl shook her head.

"I would go to la guillotine to save Captain LaCromie," said Lucille, tears filling her eyes.

"Yes, you're in love with him," bluntly replied the captain.

Lucille blushed, then smiled faintly through her tears.

"How can I help him?" she asked.

"See, you take your brother's lunch to the Conciergerie?"

The girl nodded.

"Tell him, but very softly that I must see him to-night."

Captain Poitiers walked to his home with rapid strides, but was deep in thought, from which he was suddenly awakened by encountering at the Champ Elysees a company of fifty men under guard on the way to the Conciergerie prison.

"Let me think this business out," he said to himself as he sat at home with his elbows upon his knees and his head held in his hands.

Long and earnestly he pondered. Then he arose with the look of a man who has solved a difficult problem and walking to a locker removed a small bag and left the house. The night found him in conference with Roland Renaud.

"I take my life in my hands in this business," said the brother of Lucille.

"Not if the gaoler is with you," replied Captain Poitiers with emphasis.

"But how can he be gained?" asked the young man.

Captain Poitiers took a bag from his coat pocket

and placed it upon the table, then untying the string that bound it, poured out some shining gold pieces. A half hour later Roland Renaud left the house and hastened back to the prison of the Conciergerie, which he had left two hours before on a permit to visit his sick mother.

In his foul cell, Jacques LaCromie awaited his doom. The guillotine had lost all the terror it might and did possess to some of its victims, but there was no horror in the shadow of the valley of death in which he now walked;—he was calm and undisturbed. No regrets of his conduct under the Commune filled his breast. He rejoiced that the women of the household of the LeBlancs had escaped and his conscience approved his defense of the imperilled women at LaForce. He was but performing his duty as a soldier and was now to pay the penalty that hate demanded for that act. He knew he was signing his own death warrant when he rushed to the aid of the women in the courtyard, but had gone into the midst of the mob with the full knowledge of the probable consequences.

“Hundreds of better people than myself are having their heads sent to the block,” he soliloquized. “I am content.”

In the midst of his reverie the door opened and

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a bearded young man, apparently of his own age, was thrust into the cell.

"Comrade in sorrow, I greet you," said LaCromie courteously.

"Yes, both reserved for the same fate. I die to-morrow," said the stranger.

"If my head would stay this river of blood, willingly would I give it," replied LaCromie.

The stranger clasped his hand, then both men elapsed into silence. Soon his comrade knelt upon the floor, reverently crossed himself, whispered a prayer and sank calmly to sleep upon the pallet. LaCromie listened to the regular breathing of the sleeper, then bent over and looked at the peaceful face. By the dim light of the candle that stood outside the grated door he could make out the features and he started in surprise.

"That man is my double," he said musingly.

Then the thoughts of LaCromie went over the Atlantic again to the cabin on the shore of Morris River and kneeling close to the grated door he wrote this message, which on the morrow he would entrust with the gaoler, hoping that in some way it would reach its destination :

CONCIERGERIE PRISON, PARIS, Sept. 5th, 1792.

DEAR MOTHER:—I have given my last days for France. You are last in my thoughts and heart.

The vengeance I have wrought upon the enemies of our house has been that taught by you and has been kindness for hate. To the bar of that God you taught me in childhood to revere I go from a land that has no God.

JACQUES.

Then he stretched himself upon the pallet of straw, exhausted by the day's scenes and incidents, and sank to sleep. The day of doom was but a few hours long. And as he slept there was in the dim and foul-smelling prison a whispered conference and the glitter of gold as it was weighed with a human life in the other end of the scales.

Two o'clock—three o'clock. But five hours of life and upon the tainted air of the Conciergerie came the sound of weeping, the voice of prayer for strength; yea, the petition of forgiveness for enemies. But Jacques LaCromie slept as one who had drawn the drapery of his couch about him to lie down to pleasant dreams.

Four o'clock. Four hours of the stream of life to run out.

CHAPTER XX.

THE RUMBLE OF THE TUMBRILS.

“HUSH! Do not make a noise!”

Jacques LaCromie knew not whether he was dreaming, but was awakened to full consciousness by a repetition of the whispered warning and the knowledge that some one was bending over him with a hand upon his shoulder. By the dim light of a candle that flickered in the corridor he recognized Roland Renaud, one of his keepers.

“Follow me, Captain,” said Renaud.

It was the first time he had been addressed by his title since his arrest. Scarcely knowing whether he was really awake or in a walking vision, LaCromie left his cell, the door was locked upon its solitary occupant, who still slept, and Renaud led the way through a low vaulted chamber, up a flight of stairs and stopped before a low door. The rusty lock creaked, the grated door was pulled open and Renaud entered. Neither had

said a word in their passage from cell to cell and LaCromie simply took the incident of his removal as the prelude to the march to the place of execution.

"It lacks but a few hours of the time, Captain," said Renaud in a low tone. "At seven o'clock you go free."

"So the Republic reckons it," was the reply. "I will be free, indeed."

"Monsieur LaCromie," said Renaud earnestly, but still in a low tone, "you will pass out before the guard."

"So will all of us," was the laconic rejoinder.

"Nay, Captain, do you not understand me? You will go out from the Conciergerie not to the guillotine, but to freedom."

"Do not mock me. I'm not afraid of the guillotine."

"Put on this cap and this coat," said Renaud, pointing to the garments; "shave off your beard, fix the ribbon of the Republic upon your hair and you will leave here unharmed—at liberty."

"Was that man who was put in my cell last night—that man who resembles me—was he put there to die in my stead?" demanded LaCromie. "Then take me back! It shall not be!"

"Hush, monsieur!" implored Renaud. "That man is condemned to die to-day. It would matter

not whether you went back or not—but we found an error on the record. Listen, monsieur! My life is forfeit if you do not as I say!”

The keeper spoke in low tones, but with great earnestness and in great trepidation. Jacques bade him go on.

“An error, I say, was found on the roll. Twenty-nine are recorded there to die to-day, but there were thirty condemned.”

“Then let me take the place of one of those women.”

“Impossible, Captain! You will cost the life of the gaoler, my life, the life of Captain Poitiers, the life of my sister Lucille, whom you saved from Madame Lizette—Mon Dieu, Captain, do not be rash!”

LaCromie laid his hand upon the arm of Renaud.

“I’ll do as you bid me,” he said.

The keeper whispered brief instructions, left the cell, closed the door and LaCromie, still wondering whether or not he was in a dream, heard the soft echo of his footfalls, then all was quiet.

The gray dawn was beginning to chase away the shadows from the streets of Paris and in the Rue des Chantres a maiden knelt before an altar and offered a petition—not for her own safety, but for the deliverance of a prisoner for whose

sake she was placing herself in the shadow of the guillotine.

Long before the hour of execution people began to move towards the Place de Revolution, where the guillotine stood ready for its bloody work and in the knots of citizens who paused before the grim walls of the Conciergerie was Captain Poitiers, pale, but with firm set lips and anxious face.

One hour to live! In the black prison the twenty-nine, the list of the doomed for that day, awaited their fate. Fifty victims brought into the prison on the previous day would feed the insatiable knife on the morrow. One hour and the sad procession would depart never to return. In his solitary cell, Jacques LaCromie still wondered if he was not to be numbered for the sacrifice. While he pondered, Roland Renaud appeared at the grated door, swung it open and motioned to the lone prisoner to follow him.

Renaud gave a quick, searching glance at his charge and nodded his head in expression of his satisfaction. A beardless young man, boyish in appearance despite his stalwart mien, came out of the cell. He wore a red cap of the Commune and a ribbon of the same color tied his hair at the back. Renaud passed a paper into the hand of his prisoner and led the way down the steps into the

low-vaulted chamber, that smelled more foully than ever of imprisoned sleep.

There were sounds of the moving of creaking bolts, the clanging of doors and the shuffle of feet. The cortege of Saint Guillotine was forming. Some in that company were weeping softly, but others were standing calmly with their hands bound behind them, with eyes fastened upon the floor in meditation. There were whispered words of comfort, there was even a spirit of exultation present with some of the victims marked for slaughter.

The roll-call was proceeding as Jacques LaCromie entered the low chamber and his keeper left him standing by a gendarme, who examined a paper the beardless young man held in his hand and nodded assent.

"No. 10, Jacques LaCromie," called the sergeant, and the beardless young man by the gendarme started as if in surprise and almost uttered a response.

The hand of Roland Renaud trembled as he turned the lock, while the creaking cell door as it swung open made his response to the sergeant almost inaudible. A bearded young man stepped out, the sergeant made a mark upon his list opposite No. 10 and the stranger took his place in the fated line. The roll-call completed, the gen-

darme motioned to the beardless young man and led the way to the courtyard door of the prison and a military command to the guard in the low chamber came along the corridor in a faint, but clear echo.

"Jules de Lannoy, a visitor," said the guard at the door as he looked at the paper and the beardless young man passed into the courtyard.

"These visitors lose us time every day," mumbled the gendarme at the courtyard gate. "The tumbriel's been here a half hour."

"That's so," replied a burly peasant. "I've been here for over an hour waiting to see the aristocrat LaCromie come out and get into the cart."

The beardless visitor did not pause or look up, but it was the voice of François Santerre and as the distinguished son of the Republic gazed through the gate, the visitor was lost in the crowd.

The prison door swung open and a procession led by gendarmes came into the courtyard. There was great crowding at the gate and officers were obliged to make an avenue through the human walls to the death carts that waited. The crowd counted twenty-nine and a voice near the second cart yelled out:

"Down with the aristocrat LaCromie!"

The bearded young man did not heed, but conversed with a lady of stately mien by his side.

The wheels of the tumbrils rumbled a requiem through the Paris streets in which number twenty-nine seemed to be articulate. People gazed from houses, some with intense interest depicted upon their faces, others giving but a glance at the cortege, as though some cattle were on their way to the place of slaughter. So were peasants regarded before the reign of LaGuillotine, so now are aristocrats and peasants paying the price of long years of wrong and oppression together. A guard of horsemen rode abreast of the death wagons and behind the second tumbril walked François and Madame Lizette, but the bearded man heeded not their jibes and insults, but held the hand of the woman and bade her face the ordeal bravely.

Platoons of soldiers of the National Guard were drawn up at the place of execution and the company which Jacques LaCromie had commanded was stationed near the guillotine. Number one, number two—quickly one cart is emptied of its human load as the line moves towards the executioner. Number ten mounted the platform with firm step, was fastened to the plank without a struggle, a look of contentment being imprinted upon his face, the knife descended and voices cried:

“Vive la Republique!”

But there were tear-dimmed eyes in the line of soldiers that was in front of the guillotine.

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An hour later a coach rolled out of the city of Paris and was halted at the gates by the guards. There were four passengers.

"Leaving the merrymaking of LaGuillotine for the day?" asked the corporal. "How went the Republic's list to-day?"

"Twenty-nine," replied a voice from the coach.

"Only nine and twenty? Business is slow. There'll be more by and by. Which is Captain Poitiers? And this Marianne, his wife, and this Louise, his daughter? And this is Jules de Lannoy?"

And the door was closed and the coach rumbled on. Through villages, by deserted châteaux, along lonely roads, by copse and woodland, with relays and inspections the travelers moved on. The third day and the coach rumbled into LeHavre. But still the beardless young man, Jules de Lannoy, could not shake off the feeling that he was but a spectral actor in a terrible nightmare.

A week passed and standing upon the dock across which he had been brought a prisoner as the sole survivor of the *Leopard* three years before, Jacques LaCromie waved an adieu to Captain Poitiers, his wife and daughter as they stood upon the barkentine *Le Seine* and slowly sailed away from the pier. It was to command the merchantman that Captain Poitiers received permission to

leave Paris. He was going to take his chances with the privateers in a voyage to America and LaCromie jocosely reminded him that he might have occasion to tender piratical compliments to the barkentine on the way back.

The young Frenchman watched the vessel until it was far out on the harbor, then turned to look about him. A feeling of loneliness unknown to his temperament took possession of him. He looked down the harbor at the turretted fortress and pondered on the swift mutation of the three brief years—years that had seemed only an ugly dream. No longer an actor in the stirring scenes of the Commune, his inactivity oppressed him. In an effort to shake off the gloomy thoughts he crossed the street and took a seat amid the company in a café. Sailors, stevedores, shippers and their clerks were there and the burden of their conversation was the news from Paris and its bearing upon the royal family. Opinions were much more freely expressed here than at the capital.

“The killing of the Princess Lambelle was a foul murder,” said a voice near him.

“But Freedom demands the death of aristocrats,” replied a dark-visaged man.

“Not by a mob,” retorted the other. “And so great a crime is defense of an imperilled prisoner in our accursed capital that the captain of the



"Ven you sail, Captain?"

guard who rescued Madame de Tourzel was sent to the guillotine. I honor him for devotion to duty."

The speaker brought his clenched fist down upon the table, but the noise was lost in the buzz of general conversation. LaCromie put down his glass and turned to look at the speaker. He had a bronzed face, heavy eyebrows, shaded dark gray eyes, his head was set low upon his shoulders; he was broad-chested and had the appearance of a mariner. Later Jacques heard him addressed as Captain Guillaume.

"Were well you spoke not thus in Paris," protested the dark-visaged man.

"True," replied the mariner, "else you as a red republican would hasten me to the guillotine for free speech. Bah, Chatres! We have dethroned one set oppressors to put a worse lot in power. But there comes Schnops. Enough of this."

A man of short stature and unmistakable Dutch origin, though he essayed French dress, approached the pair and took the proffered seat. He smiled and his moustache caressed his nose.

"Ven you sail, Captain?" he asked in a strong Holland accent.

"Soon as I can find a sailing master, Monsieur Schneider."

"Here ve lose much good time, already," replied Schneider. "Many privateers went oud and

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come in before we get away. All der brizes gone before we get there."

He picked up a glass of wine, looked at it and his moustache again caressed his nose. Then he lowered his voice and said:

"There was dat Captain LeeCromie, dat was had his ship sunk dree years ago. Ah, my! Beeze-ness not so goot since he's gone."

"Yes, your liberty-loving Commune took off his head because he was too good a captain of the National Guard," sneered Captain Guillaume.

"You took care of your share and the money he had in your care, too, when the French took him away to Paris," said the dark-visaged man to the merchant.

The brows knit, then the moustache caressed the nose and Schneider replied with a low laugh:

"Dere vas no law to stop that."

"But there are some of his people over the water," persisted the republican.

"Vell, vell, a shentleman in dot beeziness has no relatives."

LaCromie shifted uneasily, restrained himself with difficulty and when the group separated, he followed Captain Guillaume.

That night the privateer *Catherine* dropped down the harbor into LeSeine bay and Jules de Iannoy was the sailing master.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CLIMAX OF A CRUISE.

THE continental war between France and the monarchial powers of Europe filled the seas with privateers, but made the waters swarm likewise with war ships, and the licensed pirates of the main found their business more hazardous than in any year of piratical career. Jacques was satisfied that the *Catherine* was a swift boat, her lines were tapering, her spars light and her armament of six broadside guns and a forecastle swivel was not too cumbrous to hamper flight from a superior enemy.

A crew of seventy men, chiefly French sailors, formed the *Catherine's* complement, and while a few had been on trans-Atlantic voyages, the majority were from coasting vessels; accordingly the sailing master at once began rigid drills in handling the ship. The blood of the former pirate chief tingled in his veins as the men climbed through the rigging at his command, the bloom

came back to his cheeks and his old-time buoyancy of spirits returned.

A week of cruising in the Channel passed without sighting a prize, when at sunrise on the eighth day the lookout in the crow's nest called:

"Sails, ho, dead ahead!"

A southeast wind was sending the white caps over the ocean and crowding on all sail, the *Catherine* gradually overhauled the vessels, both of which were flying the flag of the Netherlands. A large merchantman west bound was under the convoy of a frigate.

"What do you make out, de Lannoy?" asked Captain Guillaume.

"The frigate carries twenty-five guns," he replied, "but that is all the better for us."

"How so?"

"That Dutchman is as slow as a raft. We might damage her in a running fight, but that is too risky. We must coax her off."

It was LaCromie's old pirate trick, successfully worked in a number of instances and he was told to proceed. Everybody aboard the *Catherine* was on the *qui vive*, but the cool, collected, yet decided manner of the young officer who stood by the quartermaster at the wheel and issued orders imparted confidence to the crew.

With everything set from jibtopsail to spanker

and forecourse to mizzenskysail, the privateer bore down upon the frigate like a great winged bird of the sea. LaCromie kept the ship on her course until within long range, when the *Catherine's* bow gun belched forth fire and smoke and a shot went whizzing into the war boat's rigging. The frigate was put about to give battle, but LaCromie's estimate of her sailing qualities was justified by her slow movement, for the *Catherine* swung upon her keel like a top and bore away out of range before the enemy could get into good position for a broadside.

"She's the *Gelderland*," said LaCromie to the captain as they bore away with the war ship in pursuit.

The forecastle battery went into action on the pursuer as the *Catherine* stood off, but the shots were ineffective. The manœuvre was repeated by the *Catherine* after the *Gelderland* had given up the pursuit and once more the merchantman's consort was drawn away, until five miles lay between the ships. All day the tactics were continued, the frigate in vain trying to get near enough to this tantalizing enemy to engage the foe in a fight.

"That trick is as good as the pirate LaCromie's," said the man at the wheel, as the *Catherine* dodged away again.

Jacques turned to find the eyes of the speaker

fastened upon him and for the first time he recognized the sailor whose kindly remark had reached his ears at the wharf at LeHavre when he was brought ashore a prisoner.

"What do you know about him?" asked the sailing master.

"Chased him 'round these seas more'n once trying to get a line on him," was the reply. "He was very slick at the business, but was game when caught."

"He was sent to the guillotine at Paris?" queried the sailing master.

"More's the pity," replied the old salt. "Was good to his men, they say, if he was a pirate."

LaCromie smiled and made no reply, but gazed out to sea and his mind was flooded with memories. Shaking off the melancholy he felt taking possession of himself, he directed attention to the day's *coup d'état*. He had succeeded in drawing the frigate away from her consort until ten miles lay between the Dutch ships. The merchantman, evidently believing the *Gelderland* to be equal to the task of keeping off the French privateer, had kept on her course, though under shortened sail. That she was a rich prize was indicated by the presence of the armed escort and LaCromie impressed Guillaume with the importance of following her if it took a week to effect a capture.

The wind had decreased in force as twilight came, but was still fresh enough to serve LaCromie's purposes. As darkness began to come on the *Catherine* made a daring dash upon the frigate. A broadside roared from the privateer as she got within range and immediately a flash of flame and a thunder of guns came from the *Gelderland*. Three shots struck the privateer, one tearing through the *Catherine's* bulwarks, striking Captain Guillaume and hurling his lifeless and bleeding body to the deck.

The *Catherine* went about quickly, firing rapidly and was again pursued by the frigate, whose bow guns kept in action, but the privateer soon disappeared in the darkness without having suffered much damage aside from the death of her commander. Two sailors were slightly wounded in the short encounter, but the captain's was the only life lost. His body was prepared for burial and at six bells was committed to the sea.

"That merchantman will be ours before morning," said LaCromie to the crew, "and we will not need to strike a blow or fire a gun."

The tactics of the day had put considerable distance between the Dutch ships and silently and unseen, all lights being doused, the privateer gradually overhauled her intended prize. Far astern

the red, green and white lights of the *Gelderland* glimmered and when off the merchantman's port bow, a half-mile to windward, two boats left the privateer's side, LaCromie being in the stern sheets of the first boat.

The dog watch had been set when a dark form came over the side of the merchantman. Then from both sides men tumbled over the bulwarks and swarmed upon the deck. There was no time for organized resistance, as the surprise was complete. A little knot of sailors retreated to the forecastle, and upon being assured that no violence would be shown unless there was resistance, the seamen laid down their cutlasses.

Hatches were quickly closed, guards were stationed at the companionway and inquiring the name of the commander, LaCromie went to the cabin.

"It is Captain Bloom I have the honor to address," said the visitor from the *Catherine* to the astonished commander as he sat up and stared about the cabin. A half-dozen armed men were with this stranger of cavalier air and manners, who politely requested the ship's papers, yet spoke with an air of authority.

"Ho!" exclaimed LaCromie. "So I have the pleasure of coming aboard the *Cornelius Van*

Drebbel, from the docks of my friend Hans Schneider."

"You know him?" asked Bloom.

"Somewhat to my regret," was the careless answer. "But time is pressing, Captain, and having paid our compliments to your escort, now some miles astern, I will make a little change in your manifest."

The inventory of the cargo indicated a heavy consignment of gold and silver coin.

"Schneider kindly made the exchange into English money," said LaCromie, "but he always was accommodating. We will discount these three thousand pounds sterling for his New York account by taking all of them, while these guilders and other change will relieve our pressing needs."

The *Van Drebbel* was carrying a rich cargo of merchandise, but to attempt to escape with her to a French port was almost certain to meet with disastrous failure. Furthermore, the French markets under the influence of the revolution were not inviting places at which to unload such goods. Five miles astern the lights of the frigate glimmered as she slowly gained on the *Van Drebbel*, and delay was dangerous, so taking the prize money and some wines, LaCromie's boats hastily pulled back to his ship and the *Catherine* sailed away on a long tack on a northeasterly course.

When morning dawned no sail was visible from the deck of the privateer.

"Call the men to quarters," said LaCromie to the boatswain after the morning mess.

There was a look of expectancy upon the faces of the sailors as they gathered about their new commander. The spoils of the previous night were brought from the cabin and the glittering coin was piled upon the deck.

"I'm going to divide this money," he said. "I will take only an equal share with the crew. I will name Boatswain Duroc and Quartermaster Simon to make the count. But first they will take the oath to make a fair division."

Advancing, the men placed their cutlasses upon the sword of the captain, who took their pledge. Assisted by LaCromie, the two seamen, after much mental labor, counted the money and the division was finally accomplished. The full share that would have fallen to Captain Guillaume as the commander was set aside first and this was placed in charge of the new captain. While this performance proceeded, LaCromie made a careful study of his men and decided that his second *coup d'état* could be successfully performed. Some of the captured wine had worked its exhilarating influence upon the crew and his hour was ripe. Not a sailor on the ship had ever possessed so much cash

and each had what was esteemed a fortune, while it had been gained at slight labor and only temporary risk. Their appetite had been whetted for more spoil. Raising his hand for attention, the new commander said:

"I am Jacques LaCromie, the pirate captain of the *Leopard*."

Quartermaster Simon stared in amazement and his astonishment was shared by his fellows.

"I was condemned twice to the guillotine, was released by the capture of the Bastille and escaped from the Conciergerie. We came out from Le-Havre on this ship, which is owned by Hans Schneider, who is a thief—a land shark, who robbed me and will want over half of the money you captured last night. Do you intend to give your prize money, the money that belongs to you, to this thieving Dutchman, who is too cowardly to fight and makes his money robbing other men of their earnings?"

"Never!" yelled Duroc, and a cheer from the crew indicated the ready indorsement of the sentiment.

"Well, then," continued Captain LaCromie, "we will run this ship ourselves and keep our own money."

Again a cheer went up over the waves.

"I'll put any man ashore who does not want to

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be a member of my crew. We take no life except in self-defense or in a fair fight. Do you take the oath?"

Seventy gleaming cutlasses flashed in the sunlight and a roar went up from seventy throats.

"LaCromie!"

Again the farmer boy from Morris River, the soldier of the Republic, trode the deck of a pirate ship as her commander. That day a sailor began work upon a flag bearing a crest on an eagle holding a serpent in its talons, woven upon a black field with a fringe of red.

CHAPTER XXII.

A QUESTION OF OWNERSHIP.

As cruising in the English Channel was attended with more than usual hazard, LaCromie decided upon a Mediterranean voyage, but announced his intention of putting into LeHavre first, that the men with families might make some provision for their households. Two days after the capture of the *Van Drebbel*, Captain LaCromie was awakened by the first officer Duval at sunrise with the information that the boom of guns was heard ahead.

"It's a fight and not a call for help," said the Captain. "More than one gun is in action."

The sound seemed to come from a direction nearly dead ahead and the *Catherine* sped on with all sail set in search of the combatants. Two sails soon loomed above the horizon. They were headed southeasterly and the pirate ship bore down upon them. An hour's sailing revealed an English privateer in pursuit of a French brig. The British

ship was steadily gaining, while a gun on the stern of the brig was kept in action answering the shots of the pursuer. The ultimate fate of the fugitive was quite evident, however, as the privateer carried twelve guns and many men could be made out upon her decks.

Three miles from the combatants the *Catherine* came on and an officer aboard the Englishman could be seen scanning the new arrival through his glasses.

"Run up the French flag," commanded LaCromie, and a cheer came faintly over the waters from the brig as the tri-colored ensign waved from the spanker gaff.

The Briton carried too formidable an armament for an even fight, so LaCromie resolved upon his usual tactics to draw the privateer off from his prey. To all appearances he intended sailing between the vessels, but suddenly going about, his port battery fired a broadside at the English ship, which promptly replied, but the range was too great for effective gunnery. The privateer did not change her course, evidently believing the *Catherine* had taken to flight, but LaCromie swung in a circle and passing astern of the Briton, again fired.

The challenge to battle was accepted without delay by the Englishman, who came to and began a

pursuit, but the wily pirate kept out of reach of the enemy's guns. Then the Briton returned to the business of capturing the brig, which was making good use of the diversion in an effort to get away. As the Briton went about, the *Catherine* came on again and once more shots were exchanged, the pirate's gunnery being trained on the enemy's rigging. As the privateer's forecourse was hauled in, some damage had evidently resulted. While the Briton was setting a new sail the *Catherine* showed her heels and joined the brig, which was heading up the Channel. She proved to be the *St. Quentin*, bound for Cherbourg and was convoyed by the *Catherine* off St. Pierre, her capture being prevented by repeated feints in the direction of the British privateer, which finally gave up the chase.

It had been LaCromie's undoing when commander of the *Leopard* to sail into the LeSeine bay, but he headed his ship in that direction. He was not preying upon French commerce, in fact, had protected it, and furthermore, had aboard his ship a privateer's license, so resolved upon his original intention of going into LeHavre. His papers would protect him, and gold, he soliloquized, would do the rest. Calling his men to quarters, he briefly stated the case.

"We are going into the port from which we

sailed with Captain Guillaume—Havre. While ashore, you are simply sailors of a privateer. We will stay only a day. Get your money to your friends, but if you are not wise with your tongues, your heads may feed the guillotine. I'm Captain de Lannoy while ashore."

Under the shadow of the fortress that had held him a prisoner LaCromie sailed. The *Catherine* dropped anchor in the harbor and about one-half of the crew went ashore. Later the captain's gig put the commander on the dock and he reported the death of Captain Guillaume and personally delivered his prize money. Then he hastened to the branch office of Schneider & Company.

A stocky man of medium stature sat at a desk. As the visitor entered a moustache caressed the nose of the man in the chair.

"Monsieur de Lannoy returns soon already with the ship," said the man at the desk. The moustache went up once more, the small eyes glistened and their owner laughed silently.

"Captain Jacques LaCromie, late of the *Leopard*, if you please, Monsieur Schneider," said the visitor with a warmth that did not seem at all necessary.

Hans Schneider gave a start as though the visitor had thrust him with his sword and the moustache caressed the nose in a very excited manner.

"Gott in himmel!" exclaimed the Dutch merchant. "Is the dead come alive?"

"Not through any act of yours, nor anything you would have done to bring it to pass," retorted the pirate chief.

"Me thought—"

"I had gone to the guillotine," interrupted Jacques, "and it was not needful that you file papers at the LeHavre fortress to help send me there."

The Dutch merchant glanced uneasily towards the door, but Jacques locked it and put the key in his pocket.

"You have robbed me and my men and it was my money that saved your worthless head from going to the plank under the knife; but that instrument is still at work and you will go there unless you sign that paper."

LaCromie drew from his coat pocket a transfer of the ship *Catherine* and big beads of perspiration came upon the brow of Hans Schneider as he scanned it, while his nose and moustache grew very friendly and held frequent conferences.

"You ask me to give you that ship?"

"No; she's mine anyway, and I'll leave here with her when I'm ready. You have stolen the price of five ships from me and if I'd catch you on the

high seas, I'd string you up at the yardarm. You will sign that, too."

And LaCromie pushed a cheque towards him as he spoke.

"Just as you please," resumed the pirate chief watching the hesitancy and trepidation of the merchant. "You can fill out that cheque, which is to victual my ship, or go to the guillotine."

As LaCromie spoke, he took a paper from his pocket and slowly unfolded it.

"I got that from the *Van Drebbel* a few days ago," said the pirate chief. "Some very interesting facts you have been giving to the Netherlands about the LeHavre fortress and some quite tersely told stories about the Republic. Schneider, you may sign or refuse, as you please."

The Dutch merchant gasped and sank into his chair, while his face grew red, then very pale.

"For heaven's sake, Captain," he implored, "do not give up dot paper!"

"Then sign!"

With trembling hands that twice dropped the quill, Hans Schneider put his name to the paper that transferred the *Catherine* to LaCromie, then made out the cheque for 10,000 francs, drawn to the order of Jules de Lannoy.

"If it is known that I have returned—that is, if Captain LaCromie is here—I will know that

the information came from you. And it will not be well for you to have anything to say on that subject."

And with a cavalier-like salute, the pirate chief unlocked the door and stalked out.

Hans Schneider mopped his face with his handkerchief, then sat with his elbows upon the table and his head resting between his hands. For ten minutes he pondered, then creeping to the door he turned the bolt and went to his safe.

"I have some babers, too," he said, taking out a blue envelope from a drawer. "M. Couthon is a big man in Paris now. This may be of use."

Again the moustache caressed the nose and Hans Schneider laughed silently. It was as though a fiend was exulting over some prospective torture of a victim sent down into his care.

"While I waits, he may be gone," he soliloquized. "Vat if when I gif dot letter to dat Bre-fect, he got dot letter from LaCromie? Dot 10,000 francs I must stop. It will fix dot Brefect and save my head, which is not too tight while dot pirate is around. But vat a fool I am mit myself already. Vile I sit here he lives to make mischief. Henri, come right away, quick!"

In answer to his summons, a clerk entered the office and he was entrusted with a message to the bank to stop payment upon the cheque, then the

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merchant hastened to the office of the prefect of police. He was obliged to wait nearly an hour before he could secure an audience with that functionary.

"How now, Monsieur Schneider?" asked the prefect.

The Dutch merchant drew a blue envelope from his pocket and handed it to the official. It read:

CLARE ISLAND, 1788.

MONS. BLUMM, Rotterdam:

The best of the picking of the French cargoes will be found in this consignment. The insult to our house is being repaid in French booty. The *Leopard* will touch here for the return in two months.

J. LAC.

"Why do you bring to me dead men's letters?" asked the prefect.

"But he is not one dead man."

"LaCromie, the pirate? His head was chopped off in Paris."

"Vell, it was chopped on again. He was in Havre now and he is a pirate again."

The prefect looked at the merchant and smiled incredulously.

"He was in my office one hour ago. He is Captain Jules de Lannoy now with the *Catherine*

and is going away dis very day. And he vill make war mit French ships, he vill!"

"Monsieur Schneider does but dream," replied the prefect, smiling at the vehemence of the merchant. "De Lannoy, I believe, is the name of the new captain of the privateer *Catherine*, but I don't chase ghosts of dead men."

"Can I no make you believe de Lannoy is LaCromie," protested the merchant in desperation. "He come into my office dis day. I say, 'How do you do, Monsieur de Lannoy?' He raise himself so, and say, 'Captain Jacqueeze LaCromie, if you please.' He rob me right in my own office!"

"So," replied the prefect satirically, "he works your own practices upon yourself. I would like to see the man who can do that."

"You do nuddings, Monsieur Brefect!" demanded the now aroused Dutchman. "You let one pirate go when hees ship is in Havre?"

"Maybe what you say is so," said the prefect, who began to be confused by his visitor's insistence. "I'll stop this ship from leaving port until I have investigated."

The prefect touched a bell upon the table and a gendarme entered. Writing a note, the head of the department of safety dispatched a messenger to the commandant of the fortress, then ordered a guard of gendarmes and left the room.

As the merchant reached the street, he saw an orderly galloping away towards the fortress, then he laughed silently and the moustache caressed his nose. His clerk was waiting at the office when the merchant returned.

"Did you go to the bank?" he asked.

"It was too late. Captain de Lannoy had been there and the cheque was honored."

Schneider stamped his foot in a rage and snatching up an ink bottle he hurled it at the clerk's head. The luckless messenger dodged behind the desk and the missile broke against the wall in a great splash of ink and crash of glass.

"Vy did you not hurry?" he demanded.

"I did, sire," protested the clerk, seizing a stool, "and I'll hammer your brains out if you try that again."

Schneider, like all men of his class, was a coward and the sudden rebellion of the assistant cowed him.

"See, see," he said quickly. "I did mean no harm. But vy could you not stop him?"

"De Lannoy went right from here to the exchange, that's why."

Schneider mopped his face, pondered in silence for a few moments, then left the office. He crossed the street and walked along the wharf. The gleam of oars of a captain's gig was seen as the boat

moved towards a ship out in the harbor and to his intense chagrin and disappointment, he recognized the *Catherine's* commander. He watched the gig until it touched the ship, saw the captain and his crew disappear over the side, and again he stamped in impotent rage.

"He will get away before that snail of a prefect can get awake," he said to himself.

As he soliloquized, a guard of gendarmes, followed by a curious crowd, came around a street corner and marched to the dock, where Schneider was standing. Some little delay was experienced in getting a boat and the Dutch merchant chafed in anger over the tardiness displayed, his moustache and nose coming into much sympathetic fellowship as he watched the landsmen cautiously climb into the long boat.

Four sturdy fishermen pulled at the oars and the prefect and his guard headed for the *Catherine*, three-quarters of a mile out in the harbor. The gendarmes climbed up the ship's side with evident difficulty and the customary display of landsmen's awkwardness.

"Halt!" cried a commanding voice. "You are dead men if you advance another step!"

Trained upon the prefect and his guards as they reached the deck was the grim muzzle of one of the *Catherine's* cannon, with a sailor at the lan-

yard. Drawn up in a semi-circle on either side of the gun stood the ship's crew armed with carbines.

"Ready!" came the command from Captain LaCromie, and seventy gunlocks clicked ominously. "The gendarmes will ground arms," he added after a moment's silence and they obeyed promptly, for there was something in that voice that did not brook disobedience.

Abashed and chagrined by the unexpected turn things had taken, the prefect found himself a prisoner of the man he had come to accuse of treason.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DIPLOMATIC RELATION.

"MONSIEUR, the prefect, will join me in the cabin," said LaCromie, saluting the official as he led the way aft.

The commander of the *Catherine* motioned M. Chaumette to a chair, then said:

"I owe the honor of this visit to my friend, Hans Schneider, I presume?"

The prefect looked confused and ill at ease, then asked:

"I am addressing Captain LaCromie, I believe?"

"You are, sire."

"Formerly of the *Leopard*?"

"Yes, monsieur," and LaCromie smiled at M. Chaumette's mystified look. "I suppose Schneider told you that?"

"Schneider?"

"Yes, I saw him going into the office of the Department of Public Safety. I knew he would go there after the little interview I had with him.

Now what orders have been given concerning me over there at the fortress?"

Again the prefect indicated his embarrassment.

"The commandant has orders to fire upon you if this ship attempts to leave the harbor."

"We are going out to-day and you will go along unless that order is revoked. If the fortress fires, you will be on deck while the firing is going on."

LaCromie looked upon the discomfiture of his prisoner in silent amusement for a few moments, then said:

"Now, Monsieur Chaumette, we may as well stop this foolishness. Schneider, the old renegade, ought to go to the guillotine for his rascality, and fearing I would send him there he sought you. If I lose my head, the head of Hans Schneider and that of the prefect of LeHavre will drop about the same time."

M. Chaumette started and in a husky voice he asked:

"What means monsieur, the captain?"

"Only a short time ago I overhauled one of Schneider's ships, the *Van Drebbe*. I found some of his correspondence that would make trouble for you and for him if I should send it to Paris."

The prefect shifted uneasily and LaCromie noted the effect of his words.

"The cruise of this ship," continued the captain

of the *Catherine*, "will be to your advantage. It will be the end of your career to stop it. Furthermore, neither you nor your guard could get away alive if you attempted to put your intention to arrest me and take me ashore into effect."

Rising from the table at which they were sitting, LaCromie walked to a locker, took out a small bag and placing it in front of the prefect said:

"There is part of your share in advance."

The partners in ill-gotten gain clasped hands and the compact was sealed. In all ages gold has been the most potential factor in bringing men together in illicit bargains and LaCromie knew its value. With the prefect in his power, LaCromie threw aside his diplomacy of speech and talked with the directness of a man who knew his advantage and was determined to dictate terms. The complicity of this official was necessary to the safety and security of the pirate chief and he soon presented a reason that appealed to the cupidity of the prefect and secured his assent to his plans; and the glitter of the gold pieces opened the way immediately.

LaCromie was satisfied that the prefect had come aboard the *Catherine* for the purpose of exacting a fee under the threat of arrest for treason, but the police official had been outwitted by his own unexpected arrest, and that under the very guns of

the fortress. The daring of the proceeding amazed him, yet challenged his admiration for the pirate commander. The bargain dictated by his host made, wine from the ship's locker made the heart of M. Chaumette merry and for half an hour the plans of the *Catherine's* cruise were discussed.

"It lacks two hours of high water," said LaCromie rising. "I leave port on the change of the tide. You see that the order at the fortress is revoked."

"Monsieur will not be molested by French guns," replied the prefect, and he followed the captain up the companionway.

The crew's two platoons were still in place flanking the gun, but a nod from LaCromie sufficed and Duroc's command brought the carbines to the position of salute. The parting at the ship's side was accomplished with all naval pomp and ceremony, the profuse professions of the prefect's good wishes and the assurances of his distinguished consideration being spoken with many bows and courtly salaams. So great was his urbanity that it was not even disturbed by the slight incident of one of his gendarme landsmen missing his footing on the ladder and tumbling overboard. Even the excited shouts of the guards did not ruffle him as they yelled orders, but did nothing to rescue their fellow, who was puffing like a porpoise when he

seized a rope dropped overboard by a seaman on the *Catherine*.

Slowly the boat was rowed back to the wharf. Its departure had been witnessed by a crowd of people, who marvelled at its long delay at the ship's side, then nearly pushed the outer rim of humanity on the wharf into the water as they surged in places at which to get a glimpse of the prisoner they expected to find with the gendarmes.

"The captain of that ship out there is not in that boat," said a fish woman.

A man standing near her who was trying to look over the heads of the people in front of him, looked much displeased and his moustache held a consultation with his nose.

"No new head for la guillotine," said a dark-visaged man who wore a red cap and carried a pistol in his belt.

The prefect brushed close to Hans Schneider, as he came ashore and walked between the lines of people on the wharf, but there was no recognition; the guard marched across the street and disappeared around the corner, while the disappointed throng on the dock dispersed.

Two hours later as the tide began to run out and the breeze blew fresh from the west, the *Catherine* weighed anchor, her sails were set and the white-winged freebooter's bow was turned towards

the sea. The French flag at the spanker-gaff was dipped as she passed the fortress and a carronade on the parapet boomed an acknowledgment of the salute of the licensed wolf of the LeSeine. The morrow found the *Catherine* out on the choppy waves of the Channel flying a black flag with an eagle and serpent crest with a blood-red fringe. The second day out the pirate was looting a prize. LaCromie had entered upon the most daring and the most successful part of his career as a buccaneer, and like all men of his calling was being lured to his fate.

After a week's cruise, the *Catherine* put into Cherbourg to replenish needed supplies and again LaCromie found his diplomacy necessary in dealing with the virtuous officials of the Republic who were troubled with the itching palm. Privateers lay at anchor in the harbor, murderous-looking sailors lounged about the docks and the city was full of unrest. It was the home of his boyhood, but though the streets were familiar, the scenes of thrift and industry were replaced by violence and bloodshed. Weighing anchor the following day, the *Catherine* stood along the coast to the town of Granville, where a stalwart sailor went ashore with the captain in his gig.

"You will not fail, Marmande?" asked LaCromie.

"Not I, Captain," he replied.

"It is a task full of danger."

"I know it."

"Get them to LeHavre in six weeks."

"Aye, aye, sir."

LaCromie pressed the hand of the seaman in a warm grasp, the sailor walked away and the pirate captain returned to his ship. The *Catherine's* course was set northward and she stood out for the English Channel. LaCromie's plans were changed by news received at Cherbourg and he headed for St. George's Channel, intending to cruise on the Irish Sea. Rounding Land's End, he put into Bristol Channel, but off Swansea was pursued by a British frigate, which gave him a hot chase, but he gave the Briton the slip at night and headed north. Off Anglesey another British frigate endeavored to get within conversational distance with her guns, but LaCromie declined negotiations of that character and led the British boat a chase, then when night came he doubled on his track and boldly sailed back towards the mouth of the Mersey. An armed merchantman was encountered and her captain immediately gave battle, but the *Catherine* stood off out of range and followed the Briton, keeping a position to windward. All day the pirate ship hovered near, veering off with each attempt of the merchantman to

come to close quarters, but at sundown the *Catherine's* bow was turned northward and as she thus gave notice of apparent intention of giving up the prize, a gun from the Briton boomed a taunt.

Darkness soon veiled the waters and the *Catherine* with doused lights turned and went in search of her prey. At three bells the lights of the English ship were made out on the port bow of the pirate vessel. The merchantman was sailing southwest, but the wind was falling and LaCromie feared that his plans would fail. At eight bells he was abreast of the quarry, a mile to leeward and could plainly hear the tolling of the hour. He heard the call for the larboard watch and he summoned his men for instructions.

The wind was light when an hour later two boats left the *Catherine* on their dangerous mission. LaCromie commanded one and Duroc the other. The sea wolves approached with muffled oars, who attacking on the port side were discovered and the alarm was sounded. The first sailor to reach the bulwarks of the merchantman fell back with his body riddled with bullets, the second was knocked overboard with a belaying pin and the repulse of Duroc's men would have been accomplished at the ship's side, so fierce was the defense, had not LaCromie's boat crew poured over upon the deck from the starboard quarter as the awak-

ened seamen of the merchantmen came tumbling up the companionway.

The defenders were driven from the port side by LaCromie's assault and Duroc's boarding party were thus enabled to reach the deck. The crew of the merchant ship were driven towards the fore-castle after a brief battle and LaCromie then sent two sailors to the cabin to make a prisoner of the captain, but he was already upon deck and he and the pirate commander met in personal combat. LaCromie was the superior swordsman and in endeavoring to retreat to join his crew the Briton fell over the body of a dead sailor upon the deck, was disarmed and made a prisoner.

Grouped at the fore-castle the English sailors prepared for a desperate defense. Again the diplomacy of the French freebooter came into service. He halted his crew as they were about to make an onslaught and addressing the defenders said:

"Men, we are more than three to one of you. Your captain is a prisoner and to fight is simply to invite death. Your lives will be safe. You may as well give it up."

"Never!" exclaimed the boatswain.

The *Catherine's* men moved closer, there was the flash of cutlasses in the ship's dim light and the click of pistol locks was heard.

"So be it, then," responded the pirate chief. "But there can be but one result."

"Hold, men," cried the captain, who was strapped to a stanchion. "There is no use of further slaughter."

A parley followed, a truce was agreed upon and LaCromie went aft with the captain.

"I have the honor of addressing—"

"Captain Blakeley, of the ship *Windemere*, from Liverpool for New York," said the Briton bluntly, "and if we had been given a chance at you to-day you would have gone to the bottom."

"But we were quite careful that Monsieur Blakeley did not get the chance," replied the urbane freebooter as he took the manifest.

"I thought you had given up the notion of trying to capture us," said Captain Blakeley, "when I saw you sail away."

"Night was more fitting for our style of calls," responded LaCromie with exasperating cheerfulness.

"You steal politely," retorted Captain Blakeley with strong irony.

"Yes, if you prefer to put it that way. But the gold in the ship's chest and cargo is the easiest commodity to dispose of and it suits my men better, for they are rather particular. But these spices are all right, too. There is no use in send-

ing these jewels to the Dutch in New York or the Quakers there in Philadelphia, while this lot of watches will do better in another market."

And thus gaily the pirate chief rattled on while Captain Blakeley ground his teeth in vexation and muttered curses on his luck.

The looting process lasted for several hours and the booty was then transferred to the *Catherine*, which had sailed close to the *Windemere* in response to a signal from Captain LaCromie. The pirate chief was the last to leave the merchantman and as he pulled away he heard the rapid movement of feet upon the deck of the *Windemere* and the rumble of the gun carriages.

"The guns of our friends, the Englishmen, were spiked before we left and a salute in honor of our departure is quite unnecessary," said LaCromie merrily and a laugh greeted the sally.

The wind had almost died out and there was scarcely enough breeze to fill the sails of the *Catherine*, which rolled upon the swell of the Irish Sea, making but little progress. As the gray dawn crept over the eastern sky and gradually drove away the shadows, the lookout made out the form of a large ship five miles astern. Captain LaCromie was called on deck. Two miles on the starboard lay the *Windemere*. The stranger astern was a British frigate of twenty-five guns.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE VIGILANT WAR SHIPS.

IF there was any doubt aboard the British frigate of the character of the two vessels revealed by the daylight, the commander of the war ship was not left long to conjecture, for a boat put off from the *Windemere* to convey the story of the night attack. The news was flashed ahead of this messenger by LaCromie himself, who with the bravado of the buccaneer ran up his black flag with the eagle and serpent crest.

"Settle away sheets and halyards," came in clear sharp tones.

Sailors scampered into the rigging of the pirate ship and like magic sails upon yardarms, top-sails and staysails quickly disappeared under the clews.

Four of the *Catherine's* men had been lost in the capture of the *Windemere* and ten were wounded, but the pirate chief felt able to repel the force that he knew would soon be directed against him. Two

hours passed and in that time LaCromie had made preparations for a vigorous defense. Sand bags, bales and dunnage were piled around the man at the wheel, while the gun crew on the forecastle were similarly protected from the enemy's fire.

As LaCromie expected, the British commander waited for the wind, that he might attack with his frigate, then was obliged to dispatch four boats with boarders. A fifth boat from the merchantman joined the squadron. The attacking party moved slowly into position in a wide circle, then simultaneously began the approach from the four quarters. The oars dipped deliberately until the boarders were half a mile distant from the pirate ship, a howitzer in the bow of the boat that lay astern of the *Catherine* boomed a signal and a dash was made for the prey.

Nearer came the British, but not a shot was fired from the *Catherine*. The bow howitzers opened fire from the frigate's boats at two hundred yards, but the pirate did not reply until the foe was within one hundred yards, when a single gun belched from the larboard battery and when the smoke had cleared away the crew of one boat was seen struggling in the water. Then a starboard gun fired, followed by the forecastle battery and all was again silent. One crew of assailants was in the water clinging to the sides of the over-

turned boat, while another was pulling away with the dead and wounded, and a cheer went up from the pirate seamen.

"They will be back again," said LaCromie to his men. "They will not give up so easily. These British have only begun and will give us plenty to do before we are done with them."

Two boats went to the rescue of the men in the water and the *Catherine's* crew quietly watched the English tars at work, LaCromie refusing to permit his men to fire.

"We will fight when it is necessary," was his reply, "but we will not murder brave men."

It was the flattering unction that the buccaneer laid to his soul, that his business was all right so long as he did not kill any more men than was necessary in the prosecution of his calling, but back of this there was in the heart of the pirate chief that respect that every really brave man feels for another equally courageous.

"That's the *Lord Percy*," added LaCromie, as he made out the name on the frigate's boats.

Over an hour passed and still the ships lay becalmed, rolling upon the swell of the Irish Sea, with no sign of a breeze. Then six boats left the side of the British frigate and moved slowly to a position a mile astern of the pirate. The second attack was to be made from a position that

would not subject the boats to the fire from the ship's batteries, but before the dash of the British boats began, the *Catherine* moved slowly around. LaCromie had given orders to fasten a cable around the mizzen mast, then carrying it through a stern port, the end was hauled on deck, an anchor attached and thrown overboard aft. The effect, through the influence of the swell, was to veer the ship.

The frigate's boats followed the manœuvre by taking a new position, whereupon the order was given to haul in the anchor, but at the same time the boats made a dash for the pirate vessel. Howitzers were trained upon the *Catherine* and the smoke obscured the enemy's approach. Small shot was coming aboard and the splintering of the timbers was heard, but beyond this there was perfect silence aboard the *Catherine*.

"Steady, men," said LaCromie to his crew, nearly all of whom were grouped on the after deck.

The boats were now at close range, coming swiftly towards the black hull of the pirate ship.

"Ready," commanded LaCromie, and there was the click of carbines. "Aim—fire!"

Each boat was covered by the pirate crew and a number of men were seen to fall or drop their oars. The aim was deadly and in the confusion

that ensued more men dropped under the volleys from the ship. But despite the galling fire, the determined sailors of the forward boat pushed under the stern of the *Catherine* and began to clamber up the anchor cable that still dangled from the stern port.

A huge object tottered a moment on the *Catherine's* rail and fell with a crash. It was one of the bales used for a rampart and was thrown amidships of one of the frigate's boats, tearing out the side and hurling the British tars into the water. A second boat met the same fate while its crew was trying to set fire to the pirate ship, but undaunted by the wreck, two boats of the *Percy* reached the *Catherine's* side and a bloody hand-to-hand fight ensued. The defense was vigorous, but the pirates were gradually forced back and two boats' crews leaped over the ship's sides. There was the slash of cutlasses, pistols kept up a fusillade, while execrations and coarse oaths made the *Catherine's* deck an inferno.

In the forefront of the fight was the pirate chief, doing rapid execution by the skillful use of his sword, and cheered on by his example his crew beat the first invaders back, but when the reinforcements came over the side and a roar of exultation went up from the British tars, the day seemed lost for LaCromie. Giving the order to re-

treat, the pirate chief rushed with his men to the fore-castle.

While the hand-to-hand fight was in progress, the swivel gun had been trained down the deck and as the pirates rushed to the starboard side, the cannon belched out a fearful charge of shrapnel, mowing down the invaders and tearing splinters from the ship's bulwarks. Leaving their dead and wounded upon the deck, the Britons left the ship, tumbled into their boats and pulled away.

Fifteen of LaCromie's men lay dead upon the deck. French and British slain lying in a circle amidships told of the desperate character of the combat. Twenty of his seamen were wounded, some of them so seriously hurt that they were still lying across the dead bodies of friends and foes, their blood mingling with that of the slain, dyeing the *Catherine's* deck a gory hue. While he was caring for the wounded, LaCromie noticed for the first time that a breeze had sprung up and that the *Lord Percy* was bearing down upon him. Crippled though he was by the loss of so many men, LaCromie had the sails of his ship set as if by a magician's wand and with her great white wings spread, the *Catherine* bore away.

The breeze freshened and going before the wind, the *Catherine* slipped over the waves, but the *Lord Percy* was gaining steadily.

"We always do better with the wind on the quarter, Duroc," said the captain and the man at the wheel was ordered to port his helm.

The frigate was only three miles astern and she immediately went on the reach to port to intercept the pirate, evidently expecting to easily overhaul her enemy, but the *Catherine* went on a course towards the southeast and again there was a stern chase, but with the frigate no longer gaining, for the wind was freshening and the pirate ship was bounding over the billows. After a half-hour's sailing, LaCromie boldly swung around and headed south with the wind on his quarter.

The *Percy* was somewhat slow in changing her course, but she went on a reach to head off the fleeing Frenchman. Save the creaking of yards and cordage under the strain of the sails, all was silent aboard the *Catherine*. As LaCromie expected his ship outpaced his pursuer in the run down his side of the angle of the course, but failing to head off the *Catherine*, the *Percy* veered to windward, her great white sails glinting in the sunlight, presenting a picture that called forth words of admiration from the *Catherine's* commander, though he divined her purpose. Then came flashes of flame and a great cloud of smoke as a broadside roared from the frigate's starboard battery, but she was still too far away to do serious damage

and the sea was too rough for accurate gunnery. Slowly the pirate ship increased her lead and with ten miles between them, the *Lord Percy* gave up the pursuit.

LaCromie found the cruising in St. George's Channel and Cardigan Bay full of exciting adventure, but not productive of prizes, as his escape from two British ships a few days later was effected only by the aid of the fog and the coming of darkness. Then he sailed southwest and two prizes were overhauled off Cork harbor and Bantry Bay. The days had passed into weeks and the *Catherine's* bow was again pointed towards Le-Havre. He had not only lost a number of men, but the cockpit was still filled with wounded and it was necessary to bring the complement to the original number for successful cruising. The distribution of the booty was made before reaching port and was conducted with all the punctilious attention to the equities of the pirate court. Where a dead sailor had a family, his share was set aside with the percentage that belonged to men who fell in combat added. The wounded also received extra share in proportion to the nature of their injuries, the loss of a finger, an eye or an ear being compensated with an exact estimate of the worth of such parts of the body, the equivalent in gold or silver being carefully counted off; but

as the *Catherine* had captured a large amount of valuable plunder, every man's share was large.

Captain LaCromie sat in state and presided over the division. His breast glistened with jewels, an ermine cloth draped the back of his chair and no sovereign wielded more complete sway over his subjects. But buccaneer though he was, fearless in battle to the point of recklessness and ready for an emergency requiring courage, LaCromie was not a harsh master, but used the arts of the cavalier instead of the brutality of the typical pirate chief; and his men looked upon him as nothing short of a prodigy of the seas.

Six weeks from the day the LeHavre fortress boomed a salute to the outward bound privateer, the *Catherine* dropped anchor in the harbor, while the tri-color was flying from her spanker-gaff. An hour later, Monsieur M. Chaumette, the prefect, put off from the wharf in Captain LaCromie's gig, which was sent ashore for him. The *Catherine's* decks shone in the sunlight, her spars were polished, and the guns were burnished like gold. The visitor was received with the *éclat* due an admiral, flattering the overweening vanity of the head of the Department of Safety, and soon he was LaCromie's guest in the cabin.

"How does the Commune?" asked the pirate captain.

"Red with blood."

"Chopping off heads like so much corn-fodder?"

"True, monsieur."

"But they're taking off the wrong heads."

"It were not wise for Monsieur LaCromie to utter such sentiments."

"Yes, yes," retorted LaCromie. "Join the club, wear a red hat, talk loudly about liberty, but liberty has gone to the dogs. That's why I am on the sea. But, listen, Monsieur Chaumette. I go on my next voyage to America to see my parents and come back with more riches—for Monsieur, the prefect—but when I return I enlist in the services of a saviour of my country. He surely will be upon the scene by that time."

LaCromie was growing vehement and the prefect placed his hand upon the arm of the pirate and checked him. He paced the floor excitedly, then asked abruptly:

"Has Marmande returned?"

"Came three nights ago."

"Alone?"

"No, monsieur; a young man and a young woman came with him, but they are in danger—they are now suspected."

"Suspicion raised by any vile hag sends your best blood to the guillotine," retorted LaCromie with an oath. "We will see whether the gossip of your

knitting women will succeed. They lodge with Aubin?"

The prefect nodded.

LaCromie walked to a locker and drew out a large box and handed the key to the prefect, who opened the lid. The eyes of the covetous French official sparkled as he looked at the contents and he rubbed his hands indicative of his delight. Jewels and gold coin met his gaze—spoils of the recent cruise. LaCromie locked the box and handed the key to the prefect.

"This stuff will be taken to your house to-night," he said. "Now do your part."

M. Chaumette was dismissed with due honor and LaCromie impatiently watched the receding sun, waiting for darkness. Duroc had been ashore getting recruits, who were easy to find, for rumors of the *Catherine's* booty were rife and at twilight he came aboard with a number of men.

As three bells sounded, LaCromie with six trusted men was rowed ashore. He proceeded directly to the house of Aubin, rapped gently at the door, and he and his companions were admitted by a white-bearded savant.

"Jacques," said the venerable student, viewing the captain's muscular form, "like your father. How fares the parents?"

"Cannot tell, monsieur," replied LaCromie

sadly, "but I hope to see them in a few weeks."

Monsieur Aubin led the way into an adjoining room and a young girl, with blushing face, rose to meet the visitor.

"Mademoiselle Lucille," said LaCromie, gallantly bending and kissing the proffered hand, "I owe my life to your brave interposition."

"But the greater debt is mine," replied Lucille.

"Roland Renaud," exclaimed the pirate chief, warmly greeting his former keeper. "And Madame Renaud, where is she?"

A shade of sadness came over the daughter's face and her eyes filled with tears.

"Has not fallen a prey to—"

"No, Monsieur LaCromie," interrupted the girl. "Disease spared her that."

"Marmande!" And the *Catherine's* commander slapped the broad shoulder of the stalwart seaman with great affection. "Well done! But while we tarry danger increases."

A loud knock at the front door resounded through the house and before the savant could respond to the summons there was a crash as the door was forced open by the pressure from without and a guard of six gendarmes entered the room. Pointing to Roland Renaud, Lucille and Marmande, the captain of the guard commanded:

"Take them."

CHAPTER XXV.

A DAUGHTER OF FRANCE.

THE captain of the guard, a fussy little officer, had scarcely uttered his command before a blow from Marmande's fist sent him reeling to the floor. The gendarmes, taken by surprise, not expecting resistance to a commission of the Republic, found themselves looking down the barrels of pistols. All of the guards were quickly disarmed, their coats and hats were taken by their captors and the soldiers were then bound.

"Your lives will go out like that!" said LaCromie, snapping his fingers, "if one of you resists or raises an alarm that will bring any of the members of that mob outside to your aid."

The sailors put on the uniforms of the gendarmes, took their guns, and Roland and Lucille were handcuffed and put between the ranks.

"You are my prisoners, say not a word in the streets," said LaCromie in a low tone.

Taking Aubin aside he urged the savant to accompany them, but the scholar refused.

"I will stay," he said firmly. "I am an old man, my time is nearly spent. If they want my life it but cuts off a few days. Go, Jacques, and save these young people."

LaCromie embraced the noble scientist and said:

"I have planned with the prefect to say that you aided the Republic by entertaining my friends here. He will protect you."

"Not so, Jacques. I need no subterfuge. I gladly gave your friends shelter. Go, and heaven give you protection."

The crowd that had gathered outside had grown impatient and clamored to see the prisoners. Giving the command, LaCromie led the way and passed quickly into the street with his guard. A howl of fiendish joy went up as the supposed gendarmes came out and Lucille shrank back with fear. The night was dark, there were but few torches in the street and the deception was not detected. LaCromie moved with as great celerity as possible, but the howling throng impeded his progress. Twenty minutes that seemed hours to the young girl passed and she almost fainted from fright. Across the quay to the pier moved the surging mob about the prisoners. A boat came out of the darkness, the gendarmes pushed a path for Renaud and

his sister and before the crowd had time to realize what had happened, the prisoners and the guard were in the boat. A voice said:

"We go to the fortress by water." And darkness soon hid the party.

Silently but swiftly the boat moved towards the center of the harbor, where three red lights glimmered. When morning came, the *Catherine* had disappeared.

Roland Renaud stood by Captain LaCromie upon the poop deck of the pirate ship as the turrets of the castle prison faded from view in the gloom.

"I fear for Monsieur Aubin," said Renaud. "Would that he had come with us."

"If trouble comes to him some illustrious heads in LeHavre will drop into the basket."

"What means monsieur?"

"The prefect of police is a thief and more than that. It can be shown that he has betrayed France. I placed a letter in the hands of Aubin giving some of the facts. If the prefect does not take care of my friend Aubin, all the worse for the head of the Department of Public Safety. Aubin will convey the information of the *coup d'état* to-night to M. Chaumette. I told him to wait an hour, then do so."

Morning found the pirate ship far out on the bay, riding the white-crested waves. Lucille did

not appear at the breakfast table in the cabin, while her brother was on deck furnishing the usual entertainment for the sailors in the initiatory ceremony of getting his sea legs on, the seamen in the meantime offering all sorts of marine dainties to tempt the lost appetite of the landsman.

"The excitement was too much for mademoiselle," suggested Duroc.

"That may be in her case," retorted the captain, "but the explanation will scarcely fit the case of her brother out there on deck. Excitement does not usually work that way."

Stiff breezes sent the *Catherine* plowing over the waves and two days passed before Lucille could make her appearance on deck. She was pale, but LaCromie could not refrain from mental comments upon her beauty of face, which was very spiritual in its depth of expression, tenderness and pathos.

"Mon Dieu!" he exclaimed. "A Madonna aboard a pirate ship! We have the devil here all the time. What a bride for my brother Jean. I wonder does the sweet fellow live?"

"How fares mademoiselle?" he asked, approaching and bowing courteously.

"Very well for a land lubber," she replied with a smile.

And again LaCromie studied the beautiful face before him.

"Curse the day I took the oath of St. John's," he soliloquized. "But this is too fair a form for a buccaneer's bride. Nay, I ruined one life. Would that she and Jean could meet. I'd empty my coffers for a bridal gift."

"To what port, Captain, do we sail?"

"We are headed for Clare Island, off the west coast of Ireland. You and Roland will there be transferred to a ship for America."

"Captain LaCromie shows great kindness, which I wish we could return."

"Heavens, Mademoiselle Lucille, did you not risk your very head to la guillotine to get me out of the Conciergerie? The great debt is mine. Talk not of making any return. But tell me of your escape from Paris. I have not yet had an opportunity to hear Marmande's story."

Beginning with his own escape from the dungeon as the tumbrils were loading for the day's slaughter Lucille recounted the scenes in Paris, the terrible days of blood, the coming of LaCromie's trusted messenger and their journey to LeHavre, to which the pirate chief listened with intense interest. He asked many questions, then relapsed into silence and gazed out over the sea in deep contemplation. He was roused by a question from Lucille.

"Monsieur, the brave captain, has been very kind

to me and he will not be offended if I ask him something?"

"Why, certainly not," he replied.

She was silent for a few moments, then said:

"Captain LaCromie is a skilled mariner, a great fighter, I wish this was a ship of the French navy instead—instead—"

"Of a pirate," interrupted LaCromie with a good-natured smile.

Lucille looked startled at her own boldness, but was encouraged by his manner and proceeded:

"Poor France! She needs steady hands. Strong hands like yours. She is the prey of her own people and other nations, while her sons and daughters are being butchered by the Commune! O, my God, how long shall this be?"

She paced the deck and wrung her hands and LaCromie gazed with unfeigned admiration at the face more striking than ever, fired as it was with patriotic fervor. Tears followed the passionate outburst and after a few moments of silence, LaCromie said:

"Mademoiselle Lucille, this is my last pirate voyage. I shall go to Cuba for a short cruise, then to Port Norris in America, my parents' home, after which I shall return to France to tender my aid to the leader of my country, whoever he may

be. My life and my services shall be for the new France."

It was now Lucille's turn to look with admiration upon LaCromie and placing her hand upon his arm, she exclaimed:

"Even had I paid forfeit to la guillotine, I would glory in a sacrifice that would give a strong arm and a stout heart to my bleeding country, from which I am now exiled."

"A sail on the port bow!" cried the lookout and the conversation was abruptly ended.

LaCromie watched the approach of the vessel, but his thoughts were upon what Lucille had said and he pondered her sentences long and seriously. Pride and shame, aroused by the speech of the girl, were tugging at his heart and he resolved to make his voyage short, then abandon piracy. Like many a man he was going to reform day after to-morrow. Her sentiments about his native country were his own and he longed to get beneath the standard of a leader who would emancipate sunny France from her thralldom of blood.

The strange vessel was a brig, which came on until within five miles of the *Catherine*, then suddenly put her helm down and went on a course directly south. The black flag had evidently just been discovered by her commander. LaCromie watched the flight of the brig in silence and the

crew marvelled that no order was given to follow.

"There's no need for that fellow to hurry away," he said to Duroc, who stood awaiting orders. "We will not trouble him. It is scarcely fit to do the devil's business with an angel on board."

Duroc looked at his commander with astonishment depicted upon his face and LaCromie smiled as he met his officer's gaze.

"You brought a choice lot of cutthroats on board at LeHavre, Duroc," said the captain, "and I don't know how they would behave. They would want to murder everybody on board for the sake of a few francs and they must be tamed a bit before they are turned upon the deck of another ship."

"This is a new code to me," replied the officer.

"Just keep on your course, Duroc; we will have better game than that tub going there. In the meantime, keep your weather eye upon that man Seville you took on with your bandits. He is lean and wolfish-looking, and may breed trouble. It may be necessary to make him stretch hemp before we get through with that gang."

LaCromie paced the deck in silence, occasionally looking up at the disappearing brig, whose course was still south. The words of Lucille were still uppermost in his mind and a vision of future glory for France in which he would share danced

before his eyes. The thought of revenge was still uppermost, but it was retribution against the leaders of the Commune for which he sighed and to which he now pledged himself.

Two weeks passed before the *Catherine* sighted Clare Island. Two ships lay at anchor off a lee shore. The familiar ensign of a stork floated from the masthead of each vessel and the pirate ship sailed in and dropped anchor between the boats. LaCromie's gig was lowered and he called to pay his respects to the ship on his starboard, the *Brabant*. As he stepped on the main deck a thick-set man waddled forward to greet the pirate chief and he laughed silently as his moustache caressed his nose.

"Likely to find you, Schneider, any place where money is to be made," was LaCromie's greeting.

"Yah, but France poor place for money to make just now," and the Dutch merchant rubbed one hand across the palm of the other in a suggestive way.

"Wanted your head in LeHavre?" queried LaCromie.

Schneider shrugged his shoulders, then put his hands to his neck as though to assure himself that his head was still there.

"O, la guillotine did not get it," laughed the pirate chief, "though before I get done with you

to-day I probably will wish that it had. I have a good lot of stuff aboard ship for you to work your business game on me. When I come back you can buy my ship."

"She is mine already."

"At the right price she is."

"But why you go oud of dese brofitable beezi-nees?"

"Mon Deiu, profitable! Yes, committing robbery and murder to make you rich."

"But vat you do?"

"One more voyage, then go back and fight for France."

"Vell, dere vill be no one left to fight by dat time. Dere vill be nudding but people mitout heads. But how you fight? For dis madcap, red-cap beesiness?"

"Never! For a new empire!"

LaCromie touched the hilt of his sword, and his face lighted up with patriotic fervor; but it darkened immediately. A shot rang out over the water, followed by rapid discharge of firearms, mingled with hoarse cries, and men were seen upon the deck of the *Catherine* in fierce conflict.

"There's need to do some fightings over dere before you go to France," said the Dutch merchant.

But LaCromie had bounded over the bulwarks

and was already running down the ship's ladder. Springing into his gig, he commanded:

“Pull away lively, my hearties. There's mutiny on the *Catherine!*”

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAST CRUISE OF THE CATHERINE.

THE distance between the *Brabant* and the pirate ship was less than a quarter of a mile and the gig was soon at the *Catherine's* side. Bullets whizzed over the heads of the men in the captain's boat as they approached, but none took effect. While LaCromie was hastening to the scene of conflict, which seemed every minute to increase in fury, the rigging of the merchant ships was filled with sailors eagerly watching the fight aboard the pirate vessel, for their own fate depended upon the outcome of the struggle.

As LaCromie ran up the ladder of the *Catherine* a seaman armed with a cutlass disputed his passage at the top, but was driven back by a hard blow on the arm by the captain's sword. As surmised by the pirate commander, Seville was at the head of the mutineers, who comprised the major portion of the new men taken aboard at LeHavre, while several members of the old crew were in the

conspiracy. Duroc and his men, taken by surprise, were grouped forward in a hand-to-hand encounter and as LaCromie came over the ship's side a cheer went up from the defenders of the *Catherine*. Rushing down the deck the pirate captain dashed at Seville, who with sword and pistol was in the forefront of the attacking party.

"Curse you," hissed the chief of the mutineers. "I'll put an end to you here. This is my ship."

He raised his pistol to fire, but it was knocked from his hand by LaCromie's sword. Then a terrific blow was aimed at Seville's head, but was parried dextrously, and before he could recover he was thrust through by the *Catherine's* commander and he fell to the deck gasping in his death throes.

With the fall of their leader, the mutineers surrendered. They numbered twenty-five at the outbreak, but five lay dead and eight were seriously wounded. The prisoners were bound, grouped with the forecastle gun trained upon them and a sailor stood with the lanyard in hand waiting for the command to fire. A figure in white came rapidly down the deck and knelt upon the blood-stained planks of the ship and raised her hands to Captain LaCromie, while every eye was turned towards the unusual scene.

"Spare these men, monsieur, I implore you! Do not further stain your hands with blood!"

"These cutthroats have committed the worst crime known to the sea, Mademoiselle Lucille, and deserve to die. But it is not meet for you to be kneeling here to me begging the lives of such wretches."

"But will you not grant my prayer?"

"I did not intend to shoot them. That gun is to keep them from further mischief. They would have murdered you along with the others on this ship had they succeeded in capturing the vessel. I grant your petition, mademoiselle, but not for their sakes."

Lucille, with a face upon which shone a light in strange contrast with the features darkened by passion about her, rose to thank the captain and a ray of hope shone in the eyes of the miserable group that awaited death before the shotted cannon.

"Captain LaCromie," asked one of the culprits, "may I have a word with you?"

Glancing at the man as though he would pierce him through, the pirate commander pondered a few moments, then told the speaker to proceed.

"We have no right to plead for mercy, for we don't deserve it, but the man who led us into this lies there dead. He has his just deserts. He deceived us, but we swear to obey you faithfully if we will be permitted to remain with your crew."

"And you ask this with four of my good men lying there on the deck and others wounded?"

The gleam of hope left the faces of the prisoners and the crew awaited in silence the doom of the conspirators. The spokesman was a young man of regular features, a fresh, open face, and LaCromie was surprised to see him among the confederates of Seville. He was known aboard ship as Henri Meziere.

"Where is your home?"

"Nantes."

"How long have you been away from Nantes?"

"Five years."

"Where have you been?"

"On the ocean."

"Your parents living?"

"They are, sire."

"What does your father do?"

"Sea captain."

"What ship does he command?"

"He was in Paris when I last had word from him, but before that he commanded the *Mayenne*, which was lost at sea."

"Is your name Meziere?"

"Henri Meziere Poitiers."

"Release him!" commanded LaCromie, and the order was promptly obeyed. "The other men,

Duroc, confine in the brig for the present, but treat them well."

"That girl on this ship has put all sorts of queer notions into the head of Captain LaCromie," mumbled the *Catherine's* first officer as he marched his prisoners down the companionway. "Every one of these fellows should be sent to Davey Joneses' locker." And Duroc muttered a deep oath.

Weights were tied to the bodies of the dead mutineers and they were tossed overboard with as little concern as though they had been dogs, but the pirate slain were committed to the sea with naval honors.

The *Catherine's* cargo of captured merchandise was transferred to Schneider's ships, one of which was bound for Rotterdam and the other for Philadelphia, and after a few days the *Brabant*, with Roland and Lucille Renaud as passengers, hoisted sail for the voyage to America. A well-filled bag of coin was LaCromie's farewell gift to Roland, which he insisted Renaud should take as a little show of appreciation of his great services.

The *Catherine's* bow was pulled up on the sand at high water and for a week the crew were kept busy preparing for the cruise to the West Indies. In this labor, Henri Poiters and his fellow-conspirators evinced great readiness for the most exacting tasks, a fact that did not escape the eye of

the *Catherine's* commander. When the pirate ship was ready to sail, all of the men engaged in the mutiny were publicly reinstated and Poiters was made boatswain. The decision was received with all of the effusiveness and abandon of the French sailor and cutlasses flashed in air and there rang out over the waters to the little village on shore the cry:

“LaCromie! LaCromie! Vive la *Catherine*!”

The course of the *Catherine* lay south to the Azores and flying the French tri-color, LaCromie boldly put into port, took a survey and stood out to sea. Two Spanish galleons were in for a fresh supply of water, but as the French privateer was not in sight, they hoisted sail and the following day were looted by the *Catherine's* crew. Then the pirate ship headed for the West Indies.

As day after day passed without sighting a sail the crew of the *Catherine* grew restless and there was general relief when the Great Bahama was sighted and the men were permitted to go ashore. LaCromie desired to secure a supply of fresh water and fruit, as well as to give his crew an opportunity for recreation, but the conduct of the seamen in their wild orgies almost proved the undoing of the buccaneers. The hostile attitude of the natives was not heeded until a general attack was made upon the crew of the *Catherine*.

Caught some distance from the beach six of the pirates were slain, while a shower of arrows fell about the men as they retreated towards the *Catherine's* boats. While LaCromie, with his men grouped on the beach, was repelling the assault of the natives, a gun from the *Catherine* was trained upon the islanders, who fled to the woods.

Prizes brought much booty to the buccaneers in a month's cruise about Cuba and other islands of the archipelago, then across the Gulf of Mexico, along the Mexican coast, through the Gulf of Campeche, around Yucatan to Honduras, moved the pirate ship plundering and destroying. Success made Captain LaCromie and his wolves of the sea reckless and audacious. With his ship's hold full of plunder that he desired to convert into silver and gold, he turned the *Catherine's* prow northward after orgies ashore at the Ruatan Islands and a fight with the natives, who drove the buccaneers off after a battle in which LaCromie suffered the loss of several more men.

Back across the Gulf of Mexico, storm-swept for a week, the *Catherine* was driven far out of her course, then down the western coast of Florida, through the Florida Keys, the pirate ship, weather-beaten, headed for Delaware Bay. Pursuing merchantmen, battling with heavy seas off Cape Hatteras, often in peril of floundering, the *Cath-*

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erine made her way and found favoring winds and less boisterous seas off Hampton Roads.

It was eight months since he had sailed from Clare Island and the *Catherine* was a veritable treasure ship; but still unsatisfied LaCromie chased an American brigantine into the Chesapeake Bay, to be pursued in turn by the American revenue cutter, *Savannah*, a swift and natty boat that kept up the chase until darkness enabled the *Catherine* to escape, but not until shots from the cutter's guns had damaged the rigging of the pirate ship.

A week later the *Catherine* rounded Cape Henlopen and stood across the mouth of the Delaware Bay towards the New Jersey coast. A flood of memories came in upon the captain of the pirate ship as he stood upon the poop-deck and gazed towards Cape May Point, around which the shallop had sailed bearing him to his destiny. The sun was sinking behind the Delaware hills and a golden glow was upon the water of the bay and the distant shore was tinted the same roseate hue. The *Catherine* hugged the Jersey side of the bay and at eight bells the pirate ship rounded the sharp nose of East Point and rode into Morris River Cove. An hour later she dropped anchor.

The autumn had come and at daylight the *Catherine* was enveloped in an impenetrable fog. The

sun came out brightly as the morning wore on and the mists were gradually dispelled, revealing the dancing waters of the broad bay and likewise the form of an armed vessel flying the starry ensign of the American Republic. It was the revenue cutter *Savannah*, and she was bearing down upon the *Catherine*. She was a schooner-rigged vessel and was sailing close hauled under foresail, mainsail and jib, all topsails being furled.

The American carried eight broadside guns and one long gun forward and coming within easy range poured a broadside into the pirate ship, then swung about and stood off before the *Catherine* was in position for a reply. The *Savannah's* shot tore into the sides of the pirate ship and worked death to the men on the gun deck, a number falling through the effective gunnery. Following up her advantage the cutter came back to the attack quickly and crossing the *Catherine's* bow, fired rapidly with broadside and musketry, the small fire being directed into the rigging to drive the sailors from the spars.

With her fore and aft sails the American was more easily handled than the French ship, while a galling fire was kept up by the cutter, wounding many of LaCromie's men. Ten minutes after the battle began, Duroc fell with a grape-shot through his head, while Boatswain Poiters, who ran to the

wheel to take the place of the helmsman, who had been shot down, was hurled lifeless upon the deck by a ball from one of the *Savannah's* guns.

With a depleted crew and surprised by the enemy, of whose presence he had not dreamed, LaCromie was at a disadvantage from the start, but though his gun deck was already strewn with blood, he rallied his men and sailing side by side the vessels engaged in a desperate battle. The *Catherine's* forecastle gunners were picked off by the musketeers of the cutter, who fired with deadly aim, while the dead and wounded lay around the gun carriages.

The rigging of the *Catherine* was torn and cut, her main braces were shot away and she became unmanageable, enabling the American cutter to round her at will, first passing astern, delivering a broadside, then standing off and coming back under the bow and raking the deck. LaCromie could only reply to the first manœuvre with a volley of musketry from the stern of the ship, but trained the bow gun upon his alert enemy as she came up, but as he pointed the piece he staggered and fell to the deck with a wound in his leg. He crawled to the gun and fired as the *Savannah* crossed his bow, but a withering fire of cannon shot and musketry swept his ship and he dropped again with a bullet in his breast.

Again the American cutter circled about her antagonist, delivering a broadside. A feeble reply from a single gun came from the *Catherine*, then firing ceased. Smoke was seen coming from a stern port of the pirate ship and two boats quickly put off from the cutter. A young lieutenant, stalwart in form, was the first man to step upon the gory deck of the pirate ship. But five men had escaped wounds, while about the guns was the story, written in ghastly faces set in death, of the terrible effects of the cutter's fire. One of the pirates pointed towards the forecastle and the American officer walked to the prostrate form of the *Catherine's* commander, who was lying mortally wounded.

"Great heavens, Jacques LaCromie, you?" cried the startled lieutenant, kneeling by the dying man.

"Yes, Ben Loveland, you have finished me," said the pirate captain faintly. "I will soon be gone. Give me your hand, Ben. I wronged you and wronged Bessie. Tell my father and mother I tried to avenge their wrongs, that I was coming to see them to-day, then go back to fight for France."

The young lieutenant watched the heaving bosom, the breathing grew fainter and he thought the *Catherine's* commander had passed away, but the

dying pirate chief suddenly opened his eyes, partly raised his body and called out:

“All hands on—”

And he fell back dead.

A shallop touched the side of the ship and two men, father and son, hastened across the deck and bent over the form of the dead captain and burst into passionate tears.

“My boy,” cried the elder of the two. “Had I known last night you were so near home!”

A bullet hole in the coat with its glistening decorations was blood-stained and the father gently bared the breast of his dead son and suspended around his neck was a gold cross with a jeweled lily bathed in the life current of the pirate commander.

Dark smoke and flashes of flame were issuing from the cabin of the *Catherine* and the body of her captain was carried to the ship's side by the father and son, assisted by Lieutenant Ben Loveland and the survivors of the pirate vessel. Then the wind carried the *Catherine* slowly towards the beach at the fishermen's settlement until she grounded near the village; and as the shallop bore its sad burden across the cove to the mouth of Morris River, a great burst of flame and smoke came from the burning ship, followed by a roar

that resounded over the waters—the flames had reached the magazine.

In the twilight of that day, a little company of mourners stood beside the open grave near the LaCromie farmhouse. In the group were the father and mother, their son Jean with his fair bride from across the sea, while Roland Renaud performed the office of sexton. And as the sun shone upon the many tinted leaves of the trees on the following morning, Jean and Lucille carried a little board and placed it at the head of the mound. Upon it was the simple inscription:

Captain Jacques LaCromie,

Our Brother.

THE END.

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